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& PACIFIC

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EDITION

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STARS AND STRIPES®



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Former SEAL rebrands after being acquitted of war crimes

BY CAITLIN DOORNBOS
Stars and Stripes

Eddie Gallagher, the former Navy SEAL, acquit this summer of murdering an Iraqi captive, is cashing in on his newfound notoriety with an apparel line.

Gallagher in September 2018 faced 10 charges including pre-meditated and attempted murder based on accusations that he shot at Iraqi civilians and stabbed a captured teenaged Islamic State fighter to death a year earlier.

He was ultimately convicted of one charge, posing with the teenager's corpse in a photo he sent to friends. Gallagher was reduced in rank after his conviction, a decision President Donald Trump reversed.

Now, the square-jawed, tattooed former chief petty officer poses in photos of a different kind: advertisements for his new clothing line through the veteran-owned Nine Line Apparel online store.

Gallagher briefly met Nine Line's CEO Tyler Merritt during a deployment. When the news of Gallagher's prosecution broke, Nine Line reached out to support him and later "came up with the idea of a brand and to create a partnership," Gallagher said in a statement on the Nine Line website.

The collaboration created Gallagher's Salty Frog Gear brand under Nine Line.

SEE SEAL ON PAGE 7



Former
Navy SEAL
Eddie
Gallagher
models
items from
his new
apparel
line, Salty
Frog Gear,
in this
screenshot
from the
brand's
web site.



WINTER of their discontent

Afghans feel chill of endless peace talk, political paralysis

BY PAMELA CONSTABLE
The Washington Post

Across the Afghan capital, carpentry shops are turning out crude pine tables. Soon, thousands of families will spend icy winter evenings huddled around them, with a few hot coals underneath and blankets spread over the top. In many areas, electricity cuts and high firewood costs have made these traditional "sandals" the only source of heat.

"The cold is getting worse, the prices are going

up and there is no work," said Baba Pahlawan, 70, who sells firewood for about 8 cents a pound. Most customers, he said, can afford only a few sticks at a time. When they run out, they buy a few pieces of coal. When that runs out, "people stay under their blankets and wait for the morning."

As another harsh winter approaches, worry is sharpening the seasonal chill in this bustling but bedraggled city of 4 million surrounded by white-capped mountains. It is being felt not only in communities like Pahlawan's — and not only because of the worsening daily struggle to survive.

SEE WINTER ON PAGE 6

Firewood seller
Baba Pahlawan, 70,
is pictured on Dec. 25
in Kabul, Afghanistan.
Pahlawan says most
customers can afford
to buy only a few sticks
of firewood at a time as
the winter cold begins.

PAMELA CONSTABLE
The Washington Post

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	Azores	Change in price	..	..	\$3,463	..
Germany	\$2.834	\$3.321	\$3.472	\$3.332	Change in price	..	..	..	+\$0.05 cents	..
Change in price	+0.09 cents	+0.05 cents	+0.08 cents	+0.08 cents	Change in price	..	..	..	+\$0.05 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$3.39	\$4.10	\$4.10	Belgium	..	\$2,878	\$3,156	+\$1.217	..
Change in price	..	+0.08 cents	+0.08 cents	+0.08 cents	Change in price	..	-\$2 cents	+\$3.6 cents	+\$8.7 cents	..
UK	..	\$3.141	\$3.382	\$3.242	Turkey	..	..	\$3,273	\$3,113*	..
Change in price	..	+0.05 cents	+0.08 cents	+0.05 cents	Change in price	..	..	+\$0.18 cents	+\$0.08 cents	..

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	Change in price	\$2,659	..	\$3,289	\$3,149
Japan	..	\$2.359	\$2.359	\$2.119	Change in price	..	No change	..	No change	..
Change in price	..	No change	..	No change	Change in price	..	\$2,639**	\$3,029	\$3,269	..
Okinawa	\$2.629	..	..	..	Guam	Change in price	No change	No change	No change	..
Change in price	No change	..	..	..	No change	..	..	..	..	..

* Diesel E10 ** Midgrade
For the week of Jan. 3 - 9

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates	
Euro (cents) (Jan. 3)	\$1.1481
Dollar (Jan. 3)	\$0.71
British pound (Jan. 3)	\$1.36
Japanese yen (Jan. 3)	107.00
South Korean won (Jan. 3)	1,128.00
Commercial rates	
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770
British pound	\$1.3149
Chinese yuan (Renminbi)	0.97
China (Yuan)	6.9632
Denmark (Krone)	6.6872
Egypt (Pound)	16.0334
Finland (Euro)	\$1.174/0.8949
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.7906
Hungary (Forint)	294.90
India (Rupee)	12.46
Japan (Yen)	108.68
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3031
Norway (Krone)	8.8037
North Korea (Won)	20.074
Poland (Zloty)	3.80
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7509
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3472
South Korea (Won)	1,159.06

INTEREST RATES

Principals (Jan. 3)	4.75
Discount rate	2.25
Federal funds market rate	1.55
3-month bill	1.54
30-year bond	1.39

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

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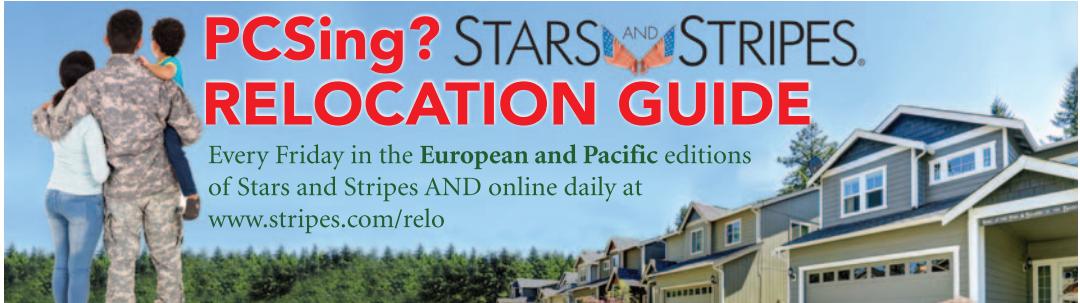
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MILITARY

Army next to ban TikTok on military devices

BY CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Army has banned the use of TikTok, a popular video app, on government phones, following a similar ban by the Navy amid growing concerns about its potential security risks to users.

The app, which allows users to share short videos, is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese company. The Army is following guidance from a Defense Department cybersecurity awareness message issued Dec. 16 that "identifies TikTok as having potential security risks associated with its use." Lt. Col. Robin Ochoa, an Army spokeswoman, said in a

statement.

The Army's ban only applies to government phones, according to Lt. Col. Crystal Boring, an Army spokeswoman.

The DOD guidance recommends that TikTok be uninstalled so that personal information is not exposed to "unwanted actors," Lt. Col. Uriah Orlan, a Pentagon spokesman, said in a statement.

"The Department of Defense generally does not provide policy on individual social media platforms, but routinely issues guidance to proactively address existing and emerging threats," he said.

Two weeks ago, the Naval Network Warfare Command directed sailors not to download TikTok

on government mobile devices, including phones and tablets, citing "cybersecurity threat assessments," Cmdr. David Benham, a spokesman for U.S. Fleet Cyber Command and U.S. 10th Fleet, said in a statement.

In the past several months, Congress has raised concerns about the app's potential risk to national security.

In a letter dated Oct. 24 to acting Director of National Intelligence Joseph Maguire, Sens. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Tom Cotton, R-Ark., requested that the intelligence community conduct an assessment on the risks posed by TikTok and other China-based social media platforms that are used in the U.S.

"Security experts have voiced concerns that China's vague patchwork of intelligence, national security, and cybersecurity laws compel Chinese companies to support and cooperate with intelligence work controlled by the Chinese Communist Party," the letter stated.

In November, Schumer also sent a letter to Army Secretary Ryan McCarthy about his concern regarding the use of TikTok and other content platforms by Chinese companies to target and reach young Army recruits.

"While I recognize that the Army must adapt its recruiting techniques in order to attract young Americans to serve, I urge you to assess the potential nation-

al security risks posed by China-owned technology companies before choosing to utilize certain platforms," he wrote.

In response to congressional concerns, TikTok released a statement Oct. 24 that its U.S. user data is stored in the U.S. with a backup in Singapore, and it denied that its data is subject to Chinese law.

Officials for the Marine Corps and the Air Force did not respond Tuesday to questions about whether the services also are taking actions to stop the use of TikTok.

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Navy vet takes a run at preventing suicide for those who served

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — Navy veteran Dustin Johnson was in despair.

He was already struggling with his transition into civilian life, and a fire burned his Missouri home to the ground in January 2019. It was the final straw for Johnson, who said he attempted suicide in the aftermath of the blaze.

"I lost everything that I owned, and that was like my rock bottom," Johnson said.

A year later on New Year's morning, the 25-year-old began an attempt at setting a record for the longest nonstop journey on foot — a 420-mile sleepless trek from Stuttgart to Berlin that will take about six days to finish. The endurance test is just one part of a broader effort by Johnson to raise awareness about preventing veteran suicides by running extraordinary distances.

Since April, Johnson also has been on a quest to become the first American to circumnavigate the globe on foot. So far, he's run more than 6,000 miles. When he is finished, the trip will add up to 16,400 miles across four continents. He estimates that his run, which will end in his home state of Missouri, will be completed by late November.

He averages about 30 miles of running per day and has already completed a stretch across part of the U.S. and South America and is now crossing Europe. After that, he will run across New Zealand and Australia before finishing in the western part of the U.S.

In Germany, Johnson, a former Navy plane captain responsible for making sure aircraft were fit for flight, has been joined for parts of his run by members of the military community. In Kaiserslautern and Stuttgart, he's also met with troops to talk about



Dustin Johnson is in the middle of a quest to run more than 16,000 miles, in an effort to raise awareness about veteran suicide.

suicide awareness.

The suicide rate among veterans is about 1.5 times the rate of those who never served in the military, according to Department of Veterans Affairs data.

"It was pretty inspirational in terms of someone who hit his low and found a way to turn his life around in a year. And then to put all that toward bringing awareness to suicide, it is pretty incredible," said Stuttgart garrison commander Col. Jason W. Condrey, who was part of a group of Americans gathered at Stuttgart's Killesberg Park on Wednesday morning to see Johnson off to Berlin.

Many military members have connected with Johnson during his journey — the Facebook page Dustin Johnson's World Record Run posts regular updates on his journey. Johnson said he often hears directly from veterans who share stories about their struggles.

Johnson said that during his own physical struggles on the road, what keeps him going is the idea of other veterans who are



Navy veteran Dustin Johnson warms up at Killesberg Park in Stuttgart, Germany, where on Wednesday he began a 420-mile run to Berlin. He wants to complete the journey without sleep or stopping for rest.

having a hard time.

"I put a lot pressure on myself. People can see me doing this. If I was looking at somebody when I was going through my hard time, and saw them give up, it would make me feel even worse," Johnson said. "If I quit, then they may quit."

While the runs so far have been a battle against the elements and endurance, the trip from Stuttgart to Berlin will be a different kind of test: It's staying awake that has him worried.

"The sleep deprivation is no joke," he said.

The record for the longest nonstop journey on foot recorded in Guinness World Records belongs to Georges Holtz, of Belgium, who walked 418 miles in six days in 1986. Guinness no longer monitors this particular record, but Johnson is gunning for it nonetheless and will submit his attempt to the World Runners Association.

Other than a two-minute bathroom break every four hours, the rules of the test require that a person's feet can never stop moving, Johnson said. An assortment of data-collecting GPS devices

will monitor Johnson's steps.

The plan is to start off with a 12-hour run and then transition to a walk. If he has the energy, he'll alternate as he heads toward Berlin. Along the way, he hopes to connect with a childhood friend based at the U.S. Army's garrison at Grafenwoehr who can keep him company on foot for a short leg of the trip.

"I'll be in my feet. I can't stop moving," Johnson said.

The drive to run around the world traces back to a childhood dream when Johnson first heard stories about a small group of runners who completed the world run. After his suicide attempt last year, a doctor suggested he put his talent for running to use, Johnson said. That's when the idea of attempting the world run came together in his mind.

In the beginning, the world run wasn't just about raising awareness. It also was to be a means for finding himself, something Johnson said finally happened after pushing to the top of a 16,000-foot mountain in the Andes.

"That was the moment where I say I found myself," he said. "So

now I am 100% focused on helping others."

There have been challenges along the way. He was sidelined briefly after getting hit by a truck in Chile. He was awakened in the night by three jaguars in Argentina and was lunged at by a 7-foot snake along a trail.

The hardest part physically was pushing his supply cart through the Andes in subzero temperatures. It took seven days of up-and-down climbing to get through a section of the mountain range, Johnson said.

"Pushing a cart full of water and food that long in that environment was miserable," he said.

The toughest on the mind was probably the lonesome runs through Peru, where there was no human contact for days on end. At one point, Johnson said, he went 11 days without seeing a person.

"That's the hardest part. Going those stretches without talking to people," he said.

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MILITARY



DEREK MUSTARD/U.S. Army

Mass casualty practice

An Army medic draws blood from a volunteer during a mass casualty drill at al-Asad Air Base, Iraq, on Tuesday. The base was attacked by rockets last month.

Offutt bans most personal firearms in wake of attacks

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Most privately owned firearms will no longer be allowed on Offutt Air Force Base beginning Thursday.

The change to the Nebraska installation's gun policy was announced after a review conducted by the 55th Wing commander. It prohibits almost all personal firearms from base, ending a regulation that allowed individuals with Defense Department identification and concealed carry permits issued by Nebraska or certain other states to access the post with guns that were locked in their vehicles.

The base announced the decision by 55th Wing Commander Air Force Col. Gavin Marks on Monday in a Facebook post.

"The commander's intent for this change is that firearms will be effectively controlled and safely handled on Offutt AFB and is reflective of the full confidence in the 55th Security Forces Squadron's ability to defend the installation and its personnel," the Facebook post read.

Marks implemented the review of firearms policies on the post after taking command in June.

The change comes less than one month after a pair of deadly shootings on U.S. military bases in the United States. The shootings occurred Dec. 4 and Dec. 6 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard in Hawaii and Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida, respectively.

The first shooting was committed by a sailor on guard duty in Hawaii who killed two civilian contractors before fatally shooting himself with his M9 service pistol. The second shooting was committed by a member of the Saudi Arabian Air Force who was training to fly jets at Pensacola. The shooting in Florida left three dead before police killed the attacker. It is being investigated by the FBI as a potential terrorist act and has spawned a Defense Department review on its vetting process for foreign troops training in the United States.

In the wake of those shootings, some in the military have called for expanded rights of troops to carry personal firearms on bases.

Troops are largely barred across U.S. installations from carrying guns outside of weapons issued for official duties, such as law enforcement or guard responsibilities. But the Pentagon in 2016 granted base commanders throughout the military great leeway in deciding what troops could be armed on U.S. posts following a review of policies launched after the 2015 shootings in Chattanooga, Tenn., at a Navy Reserve center and a Marine recruiting office that left four Marines and a sailor dead.

Offutt officials said the base's new policy was the product of a review of the installations' defenses and anti-terrorism plans that Marks was required to conduct after taking command.

The policy does allow for certain exemptions. Individuals who work in military or civilian law enforcement with a federal Law Enforcement Officers Safety Act permit will be allowed to carry a personal firearm on post.

The policy announcement on Facebook was met largely with criticism from commenters on Offutt's official page. Some commenters questioned whether the new policy would make the base less safe if it was targeted by a shooter. Others said they felt they would be less safe driving between their off-post homes and the base without a personal firearm.

"This is craziness. Are you going to pat down and car search every person who comes on base?" one commenter asked. "[Because] the wrong person can bring a gun anyway and now [only] a smaller portion of the good guys can defend themselves. Thanks a lot!"

He added Marks was aware of the negative responses on Facebook and appreciative of the feedback.

Marks "understood from the beginning this change could be viewed negatively and may inconvenience some," Hansen said. "However, he strongly believes in the policy change and feels it is in the best interest of Offutt Air Force Base."

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Firm settles lawsuit over construction

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

A construction company has agreed to pay \$3 million to settle a lawsuit, accusing it of submitting false claims to the Army for work completed to a dam at Fort Sill, Okla., according to the Department of Justice.

The federal government filed a civil lawsuit in April against LaForge & Budd Construction Co., for work conducted in 2010 to raise the elevation of a dam on Lake George, on Fort Sill's east range, according to court documents.

The company's contract specified it fill the embankment with composite soils common in engineering.

However, the Army claimed LaForge used "unsatisfactory" materials, including trash, backfills from previous construction

and metal rebar.

The Army also claimed in the suit that LaForge submitted three requests for progress payments during construction on the dam's embankment that falsely reported the work was being done based on their agreement.

In reaching a settlement, LaForge, based in Parsons, Kan., did not admit liability, and the government did not make any concessions about the legitimacy of the Army claims, according to the announcement of the settlement made by Timothy J. Downing, U.S. attorney for the Western District of Oklahoma.

The agreement allows the parties to avoid litigating the case, he said.

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Navy chief pleads guilty to child sexual abuse

By CAITLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Navy chief petty officer has been confined to the Pearl Harbor brig after pleading guilty to charges of child sexual abuse and possessing child pornography, according to a Navy spokeswoman.

Matthew Lee Richardson, a cryptologic technician (collection) at U.S. Pacific Fleet, pleaded guilty at a Dec. 10 court-martial to two counts of sexual abuse of a child and one count for possessing child pornography, according to Lydia Robertson, a spokeswoman for Navy Region Hawaii.

A redacted charge sheet from Navy Region Hawaii states that between October 2018 and March 2019, in Oahu, Richardson encouraged a child younger than 16 years old "to take her underwear off and walk around the room." The charge sheet also states that in March he intentionally touched the genitalia and buttocks of a child younger than 16 years old "with an intent to gratify his sexual desire."

His possession of child pornography charge was from April 27, 2018, according to the document.

Richardson was sentenced to eight years of confinement, a reduction in rank to E-1, and a dishonorable discharge by military judge, Capt. Ann Minami, Robertson said.

As part of a pre-trial agreement, Richardson's confinement was reduced to five years. When Richardson will serve the bulk of his confinement has not been determined, Robertson said.

Upon his release, Richardson will be required to register as a sex offender.

Richardson, a native of Virginia, enlisted in the Navy on April

20, 2004, and he arrived at U.S. Pacific Fleet on Oct. 3, 2016, according to his military record provided by the Navy.

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MILITARY

Bolton: US should resume all exercises with S. Korea

By KIM GAMEL

Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States should resume full-scale military exercises with South Korea in response to the North's threat to unveil a "new strategic weapon," former national security adviser John Bolton said in a tweet recently.

Bolton, a hard-liner who left President Donald Trump's administration last year due to policy clashes over North Korea and other issues, also raised concern that the suspension of major joint drills may have affected the readiness of American troops stationed on the divided peninsula.

Expressing frustration over stalled nuclear talks with the U.S., North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said recently his country is no longer bound by a self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear tests.

He also warned of an unspecified "shocking" action and said the North would unveil a "new strategic weapon ... in the near future."

The comments were made during a four-day meeting of the ruling Workers' Party and reported by the state-run Korean Central News Agency on New Year's Day. Notably, Kim broke with tradition and didn't make a televised address on Wednesday.

He also left open the door for continued diplomacy, saying that "if the U.S. persists in its hostile policy toward the DPRK, there will never be the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the DPRK will steadily develop necessary and prerequisite strategic weapons for the security of

the state."

DPRK is the acronym for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"How to respond to Kim Jong Un's threatening New Year's remarks? The U.S. should fully resume all canceled or down-sized military exercises in South Korea," Bolton said Wednesday in a tweet. "Hold Congressional hearings on whether US troops are truly ready to 'fight tonight'."

Trump announced he was "stopping the war games" after his first summit with Kim in June 2018 in Singapore. Seoul and Washington canceled key exercises held twice a year and reduced the scope of other joint drills.

The decision was a concession to the North, which has long demanded the cancellation of the drills because it considers them a rehearsal for an invasion. The allies insist the training was defensive in nature.

Trump also has complained about the cost of the drills, which have in the past involved the deployment of thousands of additional troops, warships and other strategic assets to South Korea.

Gen. Robert Abrams, who commands U.S. Forces Korea, and other officials have insisted that the military has adjusted and continues training at all levels to remain prepared for battle while facilitating the diplomatic efforts.

Trump, meanwhile, offered a lukewarm response to Kim's recent statements, urging the North Korean leader to denuclearize.

The two leaders made a vague

promise to work toward the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" in Singapore. But negotiations have stalled over the details, with the North demanding the lifting of international sanctions aimed at punishing it for its nuclear weapons program.

"Look, he likes me; I like him. We get along," Trump said as he walked into a New Year's party at his Florida resort Mar-a-Lago. "But he did sign a contract; he did sign an agreement talking about denuclearization," he added. "I think he's a man of his word so we're going to find out."

Kim didn't elaborate on the strategic weapon that may be unveiled, but his dismissal of the moratorium came amid fears that the North would test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile as it did several times in 2017 before diplomatic efforts began in early 2018.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "deeply concerned" by North Korea's message.

"The secretary-general very much hopes that the tests will not resume, in line with relevant Security Council resolutions," the United Nations said Wednesday, referring to sanctions resolutions banning the North from using ballistic missile technology.

The North launched short-range missiles and other solid-fuel weapons last year but stopped short of firing an ICBM, which Trump has suggested would be a red line.

However, observers have pointed out that the communist state



EVAN VUCCI/AP

Former national security adviser John Bolton said in a tweet Wednesday that the U.S. should resume full-scale military exercises with South Korea in response to the North's threat to unveil a new strategic weapon.

Bob Carlin, a North Korea expert with the Washington, D.C.-based Stimson Center, said an ICBM launch was unlikely in the short term since it would risk provoking a military response from the United States.

"The North Koreans aren't stupid, and they know that there are implications to doing that, but they do have an alternative and that is starting to deploy new strategic weapons, to send them into the field for everyone to see," he said Wednesday in a conference call with reporters.

The North launched short-range missiles and other solid-fuel weapons last year but stopped short of firing an ICBM, which Trump has suggested would be a red line.

However, observers have pointed out that the communist state

has continued to develop nuclear technology and weapons that could target U.S. bases in South Korea and Japan.

The head of South Korea's parliamentary intelligence committee, Rep. Lee Hye-hoon, said North Korea could already be considered a "de-facto nuclear weapons state."

"Given previous ICBM tests, it's believed North Korea has already acquired the technology to target the mainland United States. What matters is accuracy," Lee said in an interview published Wednesday in The Korea Times newspaper.

"It's questionable whether the North has developed the technology for its ICBMs to carry small nuclear warheads," she added.

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Navy's 2nd Fleet command is now fully operational

Stars and Stripes

The Navy's 2nd Fleet, reestablished to counter Russia in the north Atlantic, has reached "full operational capability," the Navy said.

The Norfolk, Va.-based unit, which operated from 1950 until 2011, was reestablished in 2018.

Second Fleet is now responsible for overseeing ships, aircraft and landing forces on the East Coast and the north Atlantic, reaching up into the Arctic.

"Combined with the opening of waterways in the Arctic, this competitive space will only grow and 2nd Fleet's devotion to the development and employment of capable forces will ensure that our nation is both present and ready to fight in the region if and when called upon," Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, 2nd Fleet commander, said in a statement Tuesday.

Achieving full operational capability means that 2nd Fleet can sustain command and control over its assigned forces. They work with the forces and ships belonging to other fleets as they maneuver through 2nd Fleet's area of responsibility.

The fleet's main focus is on forward operations and "the employment of combat ready naval forces in the Atlantic and Arctic," the Navy said.

In a sign of how the High North has grown in strategic significance, 2nd Fleet in September established a Maritime Operations Center in Keflavik, Iceland, where 30 staff members now are based.

As ice melts in the Arctic, there is the potential for new shipping lanes in the region and greater competition for resources between allies and Russia.

news@stripes.com



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WAR ON TERRORISM

Winter: Peace talks, presidential selection stall as cold descends

FROM FRONT PAGE

Two larger, intertwined struggles to determine the country's future have dominated the national conversation for months: on-and-off peace talks with Taliban insurgents and a contentious process to choose a new president. Now, both efforts have slowed to a near-halt, and analysts say it could be spring before either bears fruit.

Negotiations between Taliban and U.S. officials, which had advanced in fits and starts, were canceled by President Donald Trump in September. This month the talks were revived, and various truce proposals are under discussion. But the insurgents seem in no hurry to make a deal, while the White House appears likely to withdraw thousands of troops even as Taliban violence continues.

On Dec. 23, Army Sgt. Michael J. Goble, 33, of Washington Township, N.J., was killed during combat operations in northern Kunduz province, becoming the 20th American service member to die violently in Afghanistan in 2019. Taliban spokesmen claimed responsibility for his death in a roadside bombing.

Meanwhile, the troubled Afghan governing transition has become bogged down in complaints of fraud, leaving the country rudderless and tense. On Dec. 22, election officials released preliminary results showing that President Ashraf Ghani narrowly won reelection in the Sept. 28 poll, with just over 50 percent of the vote, but his opponents immediately challenged the results.

It will now probably take many weeks for an election panel to review thousands of fraud allegations, including charges that numerous votes were cast before or after election day. If enough votes are invalidated, a runoff will be required in the spring.

"We are at a deadlock of war and peace and politics," said Rahmatullah Nabil, a former national intelligence director who placed

third in the race. He predicted that with up to 300,000 ballots being challenged and a 12,000-vote margin announced between Ghani and his top contender, Abdullah Abdullah, a runoff is likely.

Others also warned that further delays could lead to political turmoil. The insurgents have refused to recognize Ghani's government, and Nabil said a broad array of Afghans need to "sit down and discuss the way forward. Either a fraudulent government or a parallel one would be dangerous for democracy."

Ghani and his aides have put an aggressive, upbeat face on the situation. The president promised one gathering of supporters this week that he and his "state-building team" will consolidate a "true Islamic republic" — meaning a Muslim democracy. Taliban leaders seek to install a theocratic emirate.

While U.S. and U.N. officials have cautioned that the election will not be over until all complaints have been investigated, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who shares Afghans' widespread antipathy toward their common neighbor, Pakistan, has already called to congratulate Ghani.

For many Afghans, both the election contretemps and the disappointing trajectory of the U.S.-Taliban talks exemplify the distance between high-level power struggles and everyday concerns.

"Peace and elections are the preoccupations of the elite, while human circumstances are in crisis," said Davood Moradian, executive director of the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies. "Facebook has created a virtual world for Afghan politics, but it is not the world in which most Afghans live."

In interviews this week, a variety of Kabul residents, especially those living in poverty, said they were disillusioned with the national leadership. After years of



Afghans shop at a market in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Dec. 8. Many Kabul residents say they are disillusioned with the country's current leaders.

LORENZO TUGNOLI/Washington Post

massive foreign aid, Afghanistan remains one of the world's poorest countries. A recent survey by the Asia Foundation said that a quarter of Afghan households earn less than \$64 a month.

"There is no security, and there are no jobs, because all the rich people have fled," said Mawlaada Wasi, 32, who carts wood and coal all day but does not earn enough to keep his home warm. He denounced politicians as corrupt and said funds spent on the elections "should have been doled out to poor people."

Several others with professional backgrounds seemed equally despairing. Some said they had lost good jobs after the drastic cutback in U.S. troops in 2014; others blamed the conflict for blocking investment or said the Ghani government had failed to create jobs while pursuing grandiose projects.

Abdul Rashid, 53, was once a teacher, but he now sells fruit. He said two of his sons had to leave school to work washing cars, while he returns home exhausted each night after 15-hour days pushing a heavy cart.

"I am very worried about the future," Rashid said. "If we did not see improvement for a majority of people during the past 18 years, when there was a flood of foreign aid and troops, how can we be hopeful for a future that brings peace and good governance?"

Last year, the Asia Foundation survey said that Afghans' optimism had increased slightly, with 36 percent of respondents saying the country was "going in the right direction," up from about 32 percent in 2018. But much of that increase, it said, was based on hopes for a breakthrough in peace talks.

Since September, that hope has

subsided again. Even if a proposed brief truce can be reached, analysts said, the likelihood of further U.S. troop cuts has left the insurgents more powerful, while the election disputes lessens the chance of creating a unified, credible Afghan team to negotiate the country's political future.

"The momentum has been lost," Moradian said. "Things are stuck, enthusiasm for the peace effort has dwindled, and the Taliban look like they are aiming for victory." The United States, he said, used to own the peace process. But no one in Kabul does.

Sitting next to a pyramid of firewood, Pahlawan put the problem another way.

"What we need are more factories, so people can go to work and stop being beggars," he said.

"Instead it looks like we are just going to have more war."

Afghans glimpse peace despite conflicting reports

BY PAMELA CONSTABLE

The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — In the past week, rumors of a possible truce have flooded the news, striking a rare spark of hope among Afghanistan's war-weary citizens.

International media outlets have reported that a cease-fire is imminent, citing unnamed sources after Taliban leaders held several meetings in Pakistan.

The prospect of a truce, seen as the first step toward a U.S.-Taliban peace deal that would soon be followed by negotiations between Taliban and Afghan leaders, has also sparked a flurry of political activity and controversy over who would lead and participate in such talks.

Spokesmen for the insurgents

have adamantly denied the reports of a nationwide truce deal. But they have held open the possibility of accepting a narrower, more vaguely defined period of lessened conflict, with the time frame and territory still in dispute.

"The Islamic Emirate has no intention of declaring a cease-fire," Zabihullah Mujahid, the main Taliban spokesman, said in a statement, using the group's name for a religious government. "The United States has asked for a reduction in the scale and intensity of violence, and discussions being held by the Islamic Emirate are revolving solely around this specific issue."

American officials have said nothing about the conflicting reports; even the main U.S. negotia-

tor, Zalmay Khalilzad, usually a fountain of upbeat tweets, has fallen silent since returning to Washington this week after meeting with Taliban and Pakistani officials.

Afghan officials said they have received no word from either side. The Taliban have refused to recognize President Ashraf Ghani's government, but he appears to have narrowly won re-election in a September poll and has asserted that the final results will confirm that, giving him a mandate to lead the peace effort.

"We have not heard anything that raises our hopes for a truce," said Javid Faisal, an aide to Ghani. "We want it to happen, because it will be an important step forward toward negotiations among Afghans. But it has to be a real truce, a complete truce that

is guaranteed and assured."

The momentum has also been slowed by the likelihood that Trump may soon reduce the 13,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan to about 8,600. Previously, U.S. officials insisted that the insurgents had to sign a peace agreement before any major troop cuts would take place.

Other points of contention include whether the fighting pause would last one week or longer, whether it would be confined to certain cities or include rural areas, and whether it would be called a formal truce or a more subjective reduction in violence.

"The Taliban are under pressure from Pakistan and the U.S. to sign a deal, and they may be putting on an appealing face to buy time, but their past behavior

shows they are difficult to trust," said Haroun Mir, an analyst in Kabul who helped found Afghanistan's Center for Research and Policy Studies. If the insurgents agree to a brief truce during a cold winter, when fighting always slows, he said, "it will mean nothing."

On Tuesday, comments from Taliban and Afghan officials suggested that mistrust and intrigue remain high on all sides. One Taliban military commander insisted that as long as U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan, there can be no truce. A member of the government's High Peace Council said both Ghani and the insurgents are being too stubborn; the president, in turn, announced plans to dissolve the entire council.

MILITARY

SEAL: Gallagher promotes his own brand of clothing

FROM FRONT PAGE

The company describes the apparel as "a coastal lifestyle brand with an edge."

"SFG provides functional, versatile, and affordable apparel solutions for your next outdoor adventure with specialty garments flexible enough for a fishing trip at sea or a weekend afternoon on the range," the company wrote on its website.

On the website, Gallagher is seen flexing in T-shirts reading "Unleash the Tempest" and "Stay Safty."

In another photo, he models a hoodie with a logo featuring a trident, a design similar to the trident pin that SEALs wear, juxtaposed with a star and five stripes. On its right sleeve is a reversed American flag, how service members wear their flag patches in uniform. Its front pocket features a special compartment to hold a beer bottle.

Also available is a \$34.99 whiskey glass and \$54.99 decanter emblazoned with "SFG" and the trident symbol.

In a promotional video, Gallagher wears Nine Line apparel in a shooting range firing rifles and pistols in slow motion.

The apparel company is not the



Nine Line Apparel

Ex-Navy SEAL Eddie Gallagher models a shirt from his new apparel line, Salty Frog Gear, in a screenshot from the brand's website.

only product to which Gallagher is lending his endorsement. His social media pages are also dotted with sponsorships from other veteran-owned businesses, such as Black Rifle Coffee Co.

In a Dec. 15 post, he posed with an assortment of Redcon1 workout vitamins and supplements with military jargon-inspired names such as Total War and MRE Lite protein powder.

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Air Force gives NCOs more flexibility with schooling

Stars and Stripes

Air Force noncommissioned officers can now schedule their own professional development schooling under a new self-registration system.

The new Air Force Personnel Center platform allows NCOs, many of whom need to attend various schools for promotion, to prioritize the dates they wish to attend, a service statement said Tuesday.

Eligible service members will receive an email and have "60 days to prioritize their preferred class dates for school attendance by first, second and third choice within a six-month window," the statement said.

The new system is aimed at giving "NCOs flexibility and con-

trol over their professional education," said Chief Master Sgt. Dan Hoglund, AFPC's command chief.

Airmen receiving their notification email this month will see a scheduling window for April through September this year. Those who receive a notification in June will choose from a scheduling period between October and March 2021.

Airmen should list their military email addresses as their primary addresses for contact, the statement said.

The new system also allows airmen a "not available" option in cases of medical, personal hardship or other requirements, the statement said.

news@stripes.com

Mountain Warfare School to get new facility

JERICHO, Vt. — The Army Mountain Warfare School in Jericho will get \$30 million in federal funding for a new facility, the Vermont National Guard announced this week.

Members of the school provided mountain warfare and cold weather training to U.S. and Afghan conventional operations forces on deployments in 2005 and 2010, the Guard said. Instructors served as experts on mountain warfare in Afghanistan.

The \$30 million appropriation will support "a critically important but previously unfunded priority of the Army," U.S. Sen. Patrick Leahy said.

The design of the 82,600-square-foot facility will start as early as this month, said Michael Bleau, deputy construction and facilities management officer. Construction is expected to be completed in late 2022, he said.

From The Associated Press

Marine law enforcement gets leeway on weapons

BY IMMANUEL JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes

Marine Corps law enforcement officers may now carry privately owned concealed weapons on Marine bases, a change made in the aftermath of tragic shootings on two military bases last month. Civilians and Marines credentialed under the Law Enforcement Officer Safety Act may carry their own firearms for personal protection but cannot use them while on duty, a service memo issued Tuesday said.

On Dec. 4, a sailor fatally shot two men and injured another before killing himself at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii. Two days later, a Saudi air force officer in training shot and killed three sailors before he was killed by police officers at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla.

"These tragic events prompted Headquarters Marine Corps to accelerate existing efforts to develop concealed carry policies" aligned with a May memo on the use of force signed by Navy Under Secretary Thomas Modly, the Marine Corps memo said.

Off-duty law enforcement officers remain prohibited from carrying weapons in Defense Department schools under federal law and in base courthouses



OSCAR R. CASTRO/U.S. Marine Corps

Civilians and Marines may now carry their own firearms for personal protection on Marine property, but cannot use them while on duty.

unless authorized by a military judge, the memo said.

A 2016 Pentagon directive titled "Arming and the Use of Force" allows military arming authorities to grant personnel permission to carry concealed firearms.

The memo signed by Modly in May states that Department of the Navy personnel may request permission from authorities to carry a privately owned firearm, subject to further guidance from the Marine and Navy service chiefs.

An Army regulation updated in January 2019 bars carrying pri-

vately owned weapons on Army bases unless authorized by the installation senior commander. It also requires the commander to set policy for firearm registration and transport for people living on base.

The Air Force also grants installation commanders some discretion to set firearm policy. For example, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., authorized current and former law enforcement officers credentialed to carry concealed firearms in 2018.

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MILITARY

Esper: More militia attacks expected in Iraq

By COREY DICKSTEIN
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON—Defense Secretary Mark Esper said Thursday that the Pentagon expects more attacks on American positions in Iraq from the Iran-backed militia forces that attempted to overrun the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

"There are some indications out there that they may be planning additional attacks," Esper told reporters Thursday at the Pentagon. "If that happens, then we will act. And, by the way, if we get word of attacks or some kind of indication, we will take preemptive action to protect American forces—American lives."

"The game has changed. And, we are prepared to do what is necessary to defend out personnel and our interests and partners."

U.S. forces are well-positioned in the region to respond to further provocations from the Kataeb Hezbollah militia, Esper said, blaming the Iran-backed group for a deadly attack on an American base in northern Iraq's Kirkuk last week and the breach of the embassy grounds Tuesday. The United States has more than



Esper

60,000 troops throughout the Middle East, including some 5,200 in Iraq, as it has increased its presence in the region by some 14,000 troops in recent months following Iranian provocations.

On Tuesday, the militiamen—many waving the yellow flags of Iran-backed Shiite groups known as Popular Mobilization Forces—spent hours tossing Molotov cocktails and rocks at the embassy's outer walls and chanting anti-American slogans. During the riot, Esper rushed 100 Marines to the Baghdad grounds from Kuwait. Later Tuesday, he ordered about 750 82nd Airborne Division soldiers to Kuwait.

On Thursday, thousands more American troops—including other 82nd soldiers—remained on alert to deploy, if necessary, a U.S. official said on the condition of anonymity.

Those soldiers could be used to bolster defenses of American positions throughout the Middle East, said Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. For now, the 82nd Airborne Division soldiers who deployed Tuesday remain in Kuwait ready to respond anywhere in the region, he said.

Milley added they could be returned to their home at Fort Bragg, N.C., if tensions down quickly.

Tuesday's embassy assault was a response to five American airstrikes Sunday on Kataeb Hezbollah locations in western Iraq and eastern Syria. The strikes, which killed at least 25 militiamen, came after a rocket attack on the U.S.-Iraqi outpost in Kirkuk, which killed a U.S. contractor and injured four American troops and several Iraqis.

Milley called Tuesday's incident at the embassy a "show." The main buildings of the more than 100-acre compound were never threatened, he said, and no evacuation order was given for embassy staff, which include some 50 to 100 U.S. troops.

"What you saw ... was a demonstration, so to speak, for the cameras," Milley said. "We are very confident in the integrity of that embassy. Anyone who intends to overrun that will run into a buzz saw."

Esper on Tuesday was critical of the Iraqi government's relationship with Iran, and urged the country to do more to protect the U.S. Embassy after Iraqi security forces guarding the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad did little to stop militiamen from reaching the compound. Baghdad's Green Zone is the city's well-defended downtown district, which houses much of the country's government buildings and dozens of international embassies.

By Thursday, security had tightened, Esper said, adding the United States maintained a good relationship with the Iraqi military.

Despite Iraq's warning that it would reconsider its relationship with the U.S. military after the Sunday airstrikes, of which it did not approve, Esper said the Iraqi government had given no indica-

tion it would ask American troops to leave.

Esper also said he had repeatedly spoken with his Iraqi counterparts about rocket attacks from Iran-backed groups—at least 11 attacks since November—and asked them to investigate those incidents and hold the perpetrators accountable.

"We haven't seen sufficient action on that part," he said. "They certainly need to help reinforce and defend the embassy, but they need to [figure out] the problem [of] Iran-backed militias, and stop these attacks from happening, and to get the Iranian influence out of their country."

Esper said any further actions that threaten Americans in the Middle East from Iran or its proxy forces would be "regretted."

"The United States of America has a very, very capable military," Milley said. "We have lots of depth, and we have sufficient forces arrayed in depth to respond to anything that occurs in the Middle East—or elsewhere, for that matter."

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USS Abraham Lincoln closer to reaching new home port of San Diego

By ANDREW DYER
The San Diego Union-Tribune

SAN DIEGO—More than nine months after embarking on what was supposed to be a seven-month round-the-world deployment, the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln is finally on course for its new home port of San Diego.

The ship, which has been operating in and around the Middle East since May, left the region in mid-December and is bound for home.

When the carrier left Norfolk, Va., on April 1, its crew knew it was in for a deployment that was outside the norm. Not only was it deploying to the Middle East, but it also was switching home ports from the East Coast to the West, originally due in San Diego around Halloween. Many Lincoln family members moved across the country over the summer—with the help of their sailors—in order for children to start school in time for the new school year.

World events—and maintenance issues on another carrier—led to the ship's mission being extended well beyond its original return date.

In August, the aircraft carrier Harry S. Truman, which was slated to replace the Lincoln in the Middle East, experienced an electrical failure that resulted in an extra three months of repairs. The Lincoln would need to remain on station until relieved.

The delay came at a time of

heightened tensions with Iran and a subsequent boost of military resources in the region.

Exacerbating the stress of the deployment was the relative inexperience of the crew, according to Gina Swain, a command ombudsman for the Lincoln. Ombudsmen serve as liaisons between the ship's commanders and family members.

For many Lincoln families, this deployment is their first. Beginning in 2013, the ship spent four years in the Newport News shipyards for midlife reactor refueling and maintenance. Almost two years of sea trials and qualifications followed, so by the time it left Virginia in April, many on board had never deployed.

"It's a hard lifestyle," Swain said. "It's not easy having your loved one be gone, and it's not easy going through the extensions."

Swain has plenty of experience—she was in the Navy from 2012-17, most of the time assigned to the Lincoln. It's where she met her husband, she said. He's currently stationed on the ship as an aviation boatswain's mate.

Swain said she relocated to San Diego in March, but that many families made the move during the summer.

Command ombudsmen, Swain said, helped families connect with Navy resources to help them with relocation, including housing and job searches.

Jaiden Chase married a Lincoln sailor in March—her high



A sailor dressed as Santa Claus directs the launch of an F/A-18E Super Hornet attached to Strike Fighter Squadron 143 on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln on Christmas Eve. The Abraham Lincoln will likely arrive at its new home port, San Diego, this month.

Jeremiah Bartelt/U.S. Navy

school sweetheart, she said—just before the ship left Virginia. She moved to Chula Vista, Calif., at the end of the summer.

"I didn't start the process until August," Chase said. "House searching by myself, it was kind of stressful—you want to make sure you make the right decision."

Chase, who found a job locally as a publicist, ended up settling on an apartment in Chula Vista—one her husband hasn't yet seen.

When the ship was extended in October, people in the community rallied to send care packages to the crew, said Lt. Cmdr. Jesus Uranga, the public affairs officer on board the Lincoln.

"It is always difficult to be away from our loved ones, especially during the holidays," Uranga

said. "We remain incredibly grateful for the outpouring of support we have seen from so many across the country, including our new home of San Diego."

Cmdr. Ron Flanders, a spokesman for Naval Air Forces in San Diego, said a new Navy deployment model—Dynamic Force Employment—means that less predictable deployments will become more routine.

"The length of this deployment is not ideal or something that's going to become a regular thing, (but) they are not going to be as predictable as they were in the past," Flanders said. "In the case of the Abraham Lincoln, it was extended due to circumstances related to maintenance and availability, but as a rule, going

forward ... our crews and their families should, prior to deployment, discuss the possibility of something like this."

Uranga said the ship and its ombudsmen team do what they can to keep sailors in touch with their families.

"We are fortunate that today's technology allows us the ability to communicate with our families and friends more freely," Uranga said. "We pass along as much information as we can to our command ombudsmen, and thanks to their tireless work, we are able to provide updates and information."

Navy officials would not comment on when the Lincoln will arrive in San Diego but it is expected sometime this month.

NATION

Sanders: 2019 ends with \$34.5M boost

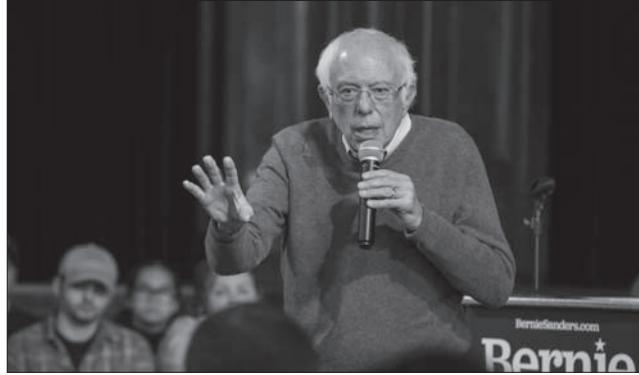
BY WILL WEISSERT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Bernie Sanders says he raised more than \$34.5 million in the final three months of last year, showing that a recent heart attack hasn't slowed the Vermont senator's fundraising prowess with the start of the Democratic presidential primaries looming.

Sanders' campaign said Thursday that the haul came from more than 1.8 million donations, including from 40,000 new donors on the final day of the year alone. Sanders' total exceeds the \$24.7 million that Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Ind., announced a day earlier that he'd raised during the fourth quarter of last year.

Strong totals from a nationally known candidate and one virtually unknown when he jumped into the race suggest that their party's primary could feature a protracted fight among well-funded rivals. The lead-off Iowa caucuses are Feb. 3, and Sanders and Buttigieg are considered among the front-runners in a crowded and unsettled field, along with former Vice President Joe Biden and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren.

Like Sanders, Warren has relied heavily on small donations coming primarily online. Her



Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., speaks at a Town Hall Breakfast on Sunday at the Newport Opera House in New Hampshire. Sanders says he raised more than \$34.5 million in the final three months of 2019.

campaign raised \$24.6 million in the third quarter but said in a recent fundraising email that it had collected around only \$17 million with a few days to go — hoping to persuade supporters to open their wallets and improve the final totals.

Sanders' 2020 bid has now raised more than \$96 million built on 5 million-plus individual donations worth an average of about \$18. Sanders' campaign says that more than 99% of his donors have not reached federal donation limits, meaning they can contribute

again. That total does not include \$12.7 million Sanders transferred from other campaign accounts as part of his presidential run.

Bernie Sanders is closing the year with the most donations of any candidate in history at this point in a presidential campaign,

his campaign manager, Faiz Sharif, said in a statement.

Sanders' polling and fundraising have remained strong since he suffered a heart attack while campaigning in Las Vegas on Oct. 1. The 78-year-old this week released three letters from doctors saying that he had suffered "modest" heart muscle damage but has since recovered well and is fit enough for the rigors of the presidential campaign and the White House should he win.

Sanders' campaign said its best fundraising month came in December, when it took in more than \$18 million from 900,000-plus donations. It said that the most common occupation listed by its donors was teacher and that the five most common employers were Amazon, Starbucks, Walmart, the U.S. Postal Service and Target.

In an email to supporters on Thursday, Sanders said there will be more where that came from.

"Against Trump, I believe we will have 50 million individual contributions, at least. And at \$27 a piece, that would be more than \$1 billion," Sanders wrote. "It's absolutely obscene and outrageous that an election would cost that much money, but our campaign has proven we will be able to raise more than enough money to win."

Border medical plan is set for immigrants

BY COLLEEN LONG
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — U.S. Customs and Border Protection on Tuesday formalized a medical plan formed in the wake of a massive surge of migrant families to the U.S.-Mexico border and a series of deaths in immigration custody.

The goal was to increase medical care and efficiency. According to the directive, the codified plan includes a sustainable proposal for triage, plus screenings for respiratory systems, instructions to isolate sick migrants to prevent the spread of disease, vaccines for staff and a supply of face masks and hand sanitizer. More than 500 medical professionals are on contract to help administer care.

The outcry over medical care began when two children died in Border Patrol custody in December 2018, followed by the deaths of others this year. A year later, Homeland Security's watchdog found no misconduct or wrongdoing in the deaths of the two Guatemalan children, a 7-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy.

At the height of the crisis, tens of thousands of migrant families crossed into the U.S. and were held in cramped, overcrowded

conditions. A flu outbreak in May sickened more than 30 migrants. A 16-year-old boy died from the illness, and video later obtained by ProPublica showed the teen collapsed on the floor for hours, alone, before he died. The video threw into question Border Patrol's version of the teen's death. An investigation is ongoing.

Over the budget year that ended Sept. 30, there were 859,510 apprehensions by Border Patrol, plus an additional 110,000 encounters of people who tried to enter legally but were deemed inadmissible. There were nearly 1 million crossings from the early 2000s, but those were mostly single men from Mexico who were easily returned, not families from Central America who require much more care.

Immigration officials were involved in more than 20,000 hospital visits this year.

Homeland Security worked with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on creating and implementing recommendations. The department set a goal of formalizing the policies by the end of the year.

"We continue to look at new ways to improve care for those in our temporary custody," a CBP spokesman said.

Castro ends presidential campaign

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Former Obama housing secretary Julian Castro on Thursday ended his run for president that pushed the 2020 field on immigration and swung hard at rivals on the debate stage but never found a foothold to climb from the back of the pack.

"I'm so proud of the campaign we've run together. We've shaped the conversation on so many important issues in this race, stood up for the most vulnerable people, and given a voice to those who are often forgotten," Castro said in an

online video. "But with only a month until the Iowa caucuses, and given the circumstances of this campaign season, I have determined that it simply isn't our time."

The video concludes, "So today it's with a heavy heart and with profound gratitude, that I will suspend my campaign for president."



To all who have been inspired by our campaign, especially our young people, keep reaching for your dreams — and keep fighting for what you believe in. ¡Ganaremos una! — which translates to "we will win one day."

Castro dropped out after failing to garner enough support in the polls or donations to make recent Democratic debates.

A former San Antonio mayor who was the only Latino in the race, Castro had stalled for most of his campaign around 1% in polls and entered October low on money.

Politician charged with DWI a week after writing column warning citizens against it

Associated Press

VICTOR, N.Y. — The top Republican in the New York State Assembly was charged New Year's Eve with driving while intoxicated in his state-issued vehicle, just a week after he wrote a newspaper column warning citizens against getting behind the wheel drunk.

Brian M. Kobl, a Republican from Canandaigua who represents a district just outside Rochester, was arrested near his home after what he called a "lapse in

judgment."

Authorities responded to a crash in Victor just before 10:30 p.m. after a vehicle ran into a ditch. Kobl was found to be the driver of the 2018 GMC Acadia that crashed in front of his home.

No one else was injured. Officials did not say where Kobl was

driving from.

Kobl said there was no excuse. "This was a terrible lapse in judgment, one I have urged others not to make, and I take full responsibility for it," the assemblyman said in a brief written statement. "I made the wrong decision, and it is one I deeply regret," he said.

On Christmas Eve, Kobl wrote a column in the Upstate Daily Messenger newspaper that warned against people driving while under the influence of alcohol during the holidays.



NATION

Trump suggests temporary ban on vape flavors

Associated Press

PALM BEACH, Fla. — President Donald Trump said Tuesday that the federal government will soon announce a new strategy to tackle underage vaping, promising, "We're going to protect our families, we're going to protect our children, and we're going to protect the industry."

Trump was vague about what the plan would entail, but suggested "certain flavors" in cartridge-based e-cigarettes would be taken off the market "for a period of time."

The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday that the Food and Drug Administration would ban the sale of most flavored e-cigarettes, such as those sold by Juul and NJOY. E-cigarette pods formulated to taste like tobacco or menthol would still be allowed.

The Journal also reported that tank-based vaping systems, which are less popular among teenagers, would still allow users to custom-mix flavors. The Journal reported cited anonymous "people familiar with the matter."

In September, Trump and his top health officials said they would soon sweep virtually all flavored e-cigarettes from the market because of their appeal to young children and teens. But that effort stalled after vaping lobbyists pushed back and White House advisers told Trump the ban could cost him votes with adults who vape.

Beginning in May, all e-cigarettes will need to undergo FDA review. Only those that can demonstrate a benefit for U.S. public health will be permitted to stay

on the market.

On Tuesday, Trump suggested a ban of flavored e-cigarettes might be temporary. "Hopefully, if everything's safe, they're going to be going very quickly back onto the market," he told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, where he was hosting a New Year's Eve party.

"People have died from this, they died from vaping," the president said. "We think we understand why. But we're doing a very exhaustive examination and hopefully, everything will be back on the market very, very shortly."

But the FDA had already announced that starting in May, all e-cigarettes will need to undergo a review. And only those that can demonstrate a benefit for U.S. public health will be permitted to stay on the market.

In Florida, Trump added: "Look, vaping can be good from the standpoint — you look at the e-cigarettes, you stop smoking. If you can stop smoking, that's a big advantage. So, we think we're going to get it back on the market very, very quickly."

of "Phase Two" before the presidential election in 2020.

And the two sides have yet to release detailed documentation of the pact, making it difficult to evaluate.

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Many economists expect any resolution



PAUL BEATTY/AP

Elise Swoopes becomes the second person in Illinois to purchase recreational marijuana as she purchases marijuana products from employee Brea Mooney, left, at Sunnyside dispensary on Wednesday, in Chicago.

Recreational pot now legal in Ill.

Associated Press

CHICAGO — The sale of marijuana for recreational purposes became legal Wednesday in Illinois to the delight of pot fans — many who began lining up hours early at dispensaries.

About 500 people were outside Dispensary 33 in Chicago. Renzo Mejia made the first legal purchase in the shop shortly after 6 a.m., the earliest that Illinois' new law allowed such sales.

"To be able to have (recreational marijuana) here is just mind-boggling," Mejia told the Chicago Sun-Times after buying an eighth of an ounce called "Motorbreath."

Illinois already allowed medical marijuana, but it is now the 11th state to allow its use and sale for recreational purposes. The law approved by the Democratic-controlled Legislature and signed by Democratic Gov. J.B. Pritzker allows people 21 or older to possess up to 1.06 ounces of cannabis flower and up to 0.17 ounces of cannabis concentrate.

Pamela Althoff, executive director of the Springfield-based Cannabis Business Association of Illinois, told The Associated

Press that she spent much of Wednesday morning in Chicago and the city's northwestern suburbs. She said wait times of up to three hours were getting shorter as the day progressed.

"It has been joyous and well-run," she said. "People are extraordinarily courteous and civil."

Policing was on-hand at most shops mostly to control traffic.

Althoff cautioned that recreational marijuana may not be consumed in public and added that like all new products, it may be a little expensive.

"We hope that down the line it will become less expensive," she said. "The message from the industry is not promoting or opposing, it's the state of Illinois made it legal and we're here to provide a safe and a quality product for those who wish to consume. We encourage our customers to be responsible."

Maya Yazel-Muska, 65, told the Chicago Tribune that she planned to celebrate her purchase from a dispensary in suburban Mundelein with champagne and edibles at home with her boyfriend.

"I'm a responsible human being," Yazel-Muska said. "I own

a home. I worked for a bank as a fraud investigator for 20 years. I rescue dogs. I volunteer. I take care of my 93-year-old mother. It's not like we're all a bunch of hippies."

Cannabis sales could generate \$250 million for Illinois by 2022, according to estimates by state officials.

Neighboring Michigan made recreational marijuana legal starting Dec. 1. Missouri voters made medical marijuana legal in 2018, but the state is still working on licensing businesses. The sale and use of weed for any reason are still illegal in Indiana and Wisconsin.

In Illinois, nearly three dozen dispensaries have been issued licenses to sell recreational marijuana.

A key part of Illinois' law is the expungement of some low-level marijuana convictions. On Tuesday, Pritzker granted more than 11,000 such pardons.

Illinois Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton bought pot edible gummies Wednesday from a Chicago dispensary, WBBM-TV reported.

"I'm here to celebrate a big day in Illinois," Stratton said.

'Phase One' of US-China trade deal to be signed at White House

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE
AND CHRISTOPHER RABEYER
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — The first phase of a U.S.-China trade agreement will be inked at the White House in mid-January, President Donald Trump announced Tuesday, adding that he will visit Beijing at a later date to open another round of talks aimed at resolving other sticking points in the relationship.

The so-called "Phase One" agreement is smaller than the comprehensive deal Trump had hoped for and leaves many of the thorniest issues between the two countries for future talks. Few economists expect any resolution

of "Phase Two" before the presidential election in 2020.

And the two sides have yet to release detailed documentation of the pact, making it difficult to evaluate.

Trump said high-level Chinese government officials will attend the signing on Jan. 15 of "our very large and comprehensive Phase One Trade Deal with China."

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China has agreed to boost its U.S. goods imports by \$200 billion over two years, the U.S. Trade Representative said Dec. 13 when the deal was announced.

Many analysts argue that the results are fairly limited given the

that includes increased purchases of soybeans and other farm goods that would reach \$40 billion a year.

China has also agreed to stop forcing U.S. companies to hand over technology and trade secrets as a condition for gaining access to China's vast market, demands that had frustrated many U.S. businesses.

In return, the Trump administration dropped plans to impose tariffs on \$160 billion of Chinese goods, including many consumer items such as smartphones, toys and clothes. The U.S. also cut tariffs on another \$112 billion of Chinese goods from 15% to 7.5%.

Many analysts argue that the results are fairly limited given the

costs of the administration's 17-month trade war against China. U.S. farm exports to China fell in 2018 to about one-third of the peak reached six years earlier, though they have since started to recover.

Import taxes remain on about half of what the U.S. buys from China or about \$250 billion of imports. Those tariffs have raised the cost of chemicals, electrical components and other inputs for U.S. companies. American firms have cut back on investment in machinery and other equipment, slowing the economy's growth this year.

A study last week by economists at the Federal Reserve found that all of the Trump administration's

tariffs, including those on steel and aluminum as well as on Chinese imports, have cost manufacturers jobs and raised their costs. That's mostly because of retaliatory tariffs imposed by China and other trading partners.

Many experts in both the U.S. and China are skeptical that U.S. farm exports can reach \$40 billion. The most the U.S. has ever exported to China before has been \$26 billion. China has not confirmed the \$40 billion figure.

Still, the agreement has helped calm concerns in financial markets and among many U.S. businesses that the trade war with China would escalate and potentially lead to a recession.

NATION

Kennel club accepts 2 additional breeds

By JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A powerful Argentine big-game hunter and a sociable French water dog have made the American Kennel Club's list of recognized breeds.

The club announced Tuesday that the barbet and the dogo Argentino are now part of the 195-breed pack.

That means they can compete starting Wednesday in many traditional, breed-judging dog shows (many agility trials and other canine events are open to all dogs, purebred or not). The newcomers can't vie for best show at the famous Westminster Kennel Club show until 2021, however.

The newcomers are "offering dog lovers very different choices," AKC spokeswoman Gina DiNardo said in a statement.

The curly-coated, bearded barbet (pronounced "bar-BAY") has a long history as a hunter's helper in France, where accounts of it go back centuries. Traditionally finders and retrievers of waterfowl, barbets — like some other breeds around the globe — dwindled during the world wars, but fanciers eventually built their numbers back up.

The medium-size dogs have a cheery, friendly reputation and often take to agility contests, en-

'They are affectionate and loyal, but owners do need to have caution to make sure a dogo fits with their lifestyle.'

Brandi Hunter
American Kennel Club

thusiasts say.

The dogo Argentino, developed by an Argentine doctor in the last century, is a large, strong and tenacious dog designed to hunt animals as large as mountain lions and wild boars. Aficionados prize the breed's loyalty and athleticism, but dogos also are among breeds that have been banned in some places. Even the AKC acknowledges that only experienced dog owners should get them.

"They are affectionate and loyal, but owners do need to have caution to make sure a dogo fits with their lifestyle" and any local regulations, said club spokeswoman Brandi Hunter. The AKC opposes any breed-specific laws.

While dogos can be protective of their people, owners also need



PHOTOS BY AMERICAN KENNEL CLUB/AP

Dogo Argentino, the powerful Argentinian big-game hunter, has made the American Kennel Club's list of recognized breeds.

to take care to protect them — from sunburn, which can strike under their short, white coats.

Fans of particular breeds often spend years building up to recognition by the AKC, the nation's oldest purebred dog registry. The designation requires having at



Barbet, the sociable French water dog, also has made the AKC's list of recognized breeds.

least 300 dogs of the breed spread around at least 20 states.

Dog breeding is the subject of considerable debate. Critics say it leads to puppy mills and short-

circuits pet adoptions. Defenders argue there's a place in dogdom for conscientious breeders and for canines bred for certain traits or purposes.

US had slowest growth rate in a century, Census reports

By MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — The past year's population growth rate in the United States was the slowest in a century due to declining births, increasing deaths and the slowdown of international migration, according to figures released Monday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The U.S. grew from 2018 to 2019 by almost a half percent, or about 1.5 million people, with the population standing at 328 million this year, according to population estimates.

That's the slowest growth rate in the U.S. since 1917 to 1918, when the nation was involved in World War I, said William Frey, a senior fellow at The Brookings Institution.

For the first time in decades, natural increase — the number of births minus the number of deaths — was less than 1 million in the U.S., due to an aging population of Baby Boomers, whose oldest members entered their 70s within the past several years. As the large Boomer population continues to age, this trend is going to continue.

"Some of these things are locked into place. With the aging of the population, as the Baby Boomers move into their 70s and 80s, there are going to be higher numbers of deaths," Frey said. "That means proportionately fewer women of childbearing age, so even if they have children, it's still going to be less."

Four states had a natural decrease, where deaths outnumbered births: West Virginia, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

For the first time this decade, Puerto Rico had a population increase. The island, battered by economic stagnation and Hurricane Maria in the past several years, increased by 340 people between 2018 and 2019, with people moving to the island offsetting natural decrease.

International migration to the U.S. decreased to 595,000 people from 2018 to 2019, dropping from as many as 1 million international migrants in 2016, according to the population estimates. Immigration restrictions by the Trump administration combined with a perception that the U.S. has fewer economic opportunities than it did before the recession a decade ago contributed to the decline, Frey said.

"Immigration is a wild card in that it is something we can do something about," Frey said. "Immigrants tend to be younger and have children, and they can make a population difference."

Ten states had population declines in the past year. They included New York, which lost almost 77,000 people; Illinois, which lost almost 51,000 residents; West Virginia, which lost more than 12,000 people; Louisiana, which lost almost 11,000 residents; and Connecticut, which lost 6,200 people. Mississippi, Hawaii, New Jersey, Alaska and Vermont each lost less than 5,000 residents.

Regionally, the South saw the greatest population growth from 2018 to 2019, increasing 0.8% due to natural increase and people moving from other parts of the country. The Northeast had a population decrease for the first time this decade, declining 0.1% due primarily to people mov-



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

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ing away.

Monday's population estimates also offer a preview of which states may gain or lose congressional seats from next year's apportionment process using figures from the 2020 Census. The process divvies up the 435 U.S. House seats among the 50 states based on population.

Several forecasts predict California, the nation's most populous state with 39.5 million residents, losing a seat for the first time. Texas, the nation's second most populous state with 28.9 million residents, is expected to gain as many as three seats, the most of any state.

According to Frey's projections on Monday, Florida stands to gain two seats, while Arizona, Colorado, Montana, North Carolina and Oregon each stand to gain a seat. Besides, California, other states that will likely lose a seat are Alabama, New York, Ohio, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, Rhode Island and West Virginia.

Reveler killed by stray bullet on New Year's Day

Associated Press

HOUSTON — Authorities say a woman ringing in the new year was fatally shot by a stray bullet outside her Houston home.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office said Philippa Ashford, 61, died after being shot at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday. The sheriff's department said it appears she may have been struck by celebratory gunfire from outside her immediate neighborhood.

The woman's family and their neighbors were discharging fireworks in their cul-de-sac when she called out that she had been shot, according to the department. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

"We have no indication that any family member or anybody in the cul-de-sac was discharging a firearm and we've walked the streets and canvassed up and down to see if we can find any shell casings in the neighborhood and are not finding anything," Sgt. Ben Beall, a spokesman for the Harris County Sheriff's Office, told the Houston Chronicle.

The Menninger Clinic, a Houston facility that treats mental illness, said in a statement that Ashford was a nurse manager there, serving as a leader and mentor to their nursing and clinical team.

"Her body has been sent for an autopsy and the sheriff's department is asking anyone with information regarding her death to call it."

The Menninger Clinic said it will hold a memorial service for Ashford and will provide grief counseling to those impacted by her death.

WIRED WORLD

Warehouse robots transform workplace

By MATT O'BRIEN
Associated Press

NORTH HAVEN, Conn. — Guess who's getting used to working with robots in their everyday lives? The very same warehouse workers once predicted to be losing their jobs to mechanical replacements.

But doing your job side-by-side with robots isn't easy. According to their makers, the machines should take on the most mundane and physically strenuous tasks. In reality, they're also creating new forms of stress and strain in the form of injuries and the unease of working in close quarters with mobile half-ton devices that distract themselves.

"They weigh a lot," Amazon worker Amanda Tailon said during the pre-Christmas rush at a company warehouse in Connecticut. Nearby, a fleet of 6-foot-tall roving robot shelves zipped around behind a chain-link fence.

Tailon's job is to enter a cage and tame Amazon's wheeled warehouse robots for long enough to pick up a fallen toy or relieve a traffic jam. She straps on a light-up utility belt that works like a superhero's force field, commanding the nearest robots to abruptly halt and the others to slow down or adjust their routes.

"When you're out there, and you can hear them moving around, but you can't see them, it's like, 'Where are they going to come from?'" she said. "It's a little nerve-racking at first."

Amazon and its rivals are increasingly requiring warehouse employees to get used to working with robots. The company now has more than 200,000 robotic vehicles it calls "drives" that are moving goods through its delivery-fulfillment centers around the U.S. That's double the number it had last year and up from 15,000 units in 2014.

Its rivals have taken notice, and many are adding their own robots in a race to speed up productivity and bring down costs.

Without these fast-moving pods, robotic arms and other forms of warehouse automation, retailers say they wouldn't be able to fulfill consumer demand for packages that can land on doorsteps the day after you order them online.

But while fears that robots will replace human workers haven't come to fruition, there are growing concerns that keeping up with the pace of the latest artificial intelligence technology is taking a toll on human workers' health, safety and morale.

Warehouses powered by robotics and AI software are leading to human burnout by adding more work and upping the pressure on workers to speed up their performance, said Beth Gutelius, who studies urban economic development at the University of Illinois at Chicago and has interviewed warehouse operators around the U.S.

It's not that workers aren't getting trained on how to work with robots safely. "The problem is it becomes very difficult to do so when the performance standards are set so high," she said.

Much of the boom in warehouse robotics has its roots in Amazon's \$775 million pur-



PHOTOS BY ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP

Joseph Salinas places packages onto Amazon robots, which then take the packages on chutes that are organized by ZIP code, at an Amazon warehouse facility in Goodyear, Ariz., last month.



Jocelyn Nieto stows packages delivered by Amazon robots into special containers.

chase of Massachusetts startup Kiva Systems in 2012. The tech giant re-branded it as Amazon Robotics and transformed it into an in-house laboratory that for seven years has been designing and building Amazon's robot armada.

Amazon's Kiva purchase "set the tone for all the other retailers to stand up and pay attention," said Jim Liefer, CEO of San Francisco startup Kindred AI, which makes an artificially intelligent robotic arm that grasps and sorts items for retailers such as The Gap.

A rush of venture capital and private sector investment in warehouse robotics spiked to \$1.5 billion a year in 2015 and has remained high ever since, said Rian Whitton, a robotics analyst at ABI Research.

Canadian e-commerce company Shopify spent \$450 million this fall to buy Massachusetts-based startup 6 River Systems, which makes an autonomous cart nicknamed Chuck that can follow workers around a warehouse. Other mobile robot startups are partnering with delivery giants such as FedEx and DHL or retailers such as Walmart.

Amazon this year bought another warehouse robotics startup, Colorado-based Canvas Technology, which builds wheeled robots guided by computer vision. Such robots would be more fully autonomous than Amazon's current fleet of caged-off vehi-

cles, which have to follow bar codes and previously mapped routes within warehouses.

The tech giant is also still rolling out new models descended from the Kiva line, including the Pegasus, a squat vehicle with a conveyor belt on top that can be found working the early-morning shift at a warehouse in the Phoenix suburb of Goodyear, Ariz. A crosscassing fleet of robots carries packaged items across the floor and drops them into chutes based on the ZIP code of their final destination.

All of this is transforming warehouse work in a way that the head of Amazon Robotics says can "extend human capability" by shifting people to what they are best at: problem-solving, common sense and thinking on their feet.

"The efficiencies we gain from our associates and robotics working together harmoniously — what I like to call a symphony of humans and machines working together — allows us to pass along a lower cost to our customer," said Tye Brady, Amazon Robotics' chief technician.

Brady said worker safety remains the top priority and ergonomic design is engineered into the systems at the beginning of the design stage. Gutelius said the aspiration for symphonic human-machine operations is not always working out in practice.

"It sounds quite lovely, but I rarely hear from a worker's perspective that that's

what it feels like," she said.

Gutelius co-authored a report published in the fall that found new warehouse technology could contribute to wage stagnation, higher turnover and poorer quality work experiences because of the way AI software can monitor and micromanage workers' behaviors.

A recent journalistic investigation of injury rates at Amazon warehouses from The Center for Investigative Reporting's Reveal found that robotic warehouses reported more injuries than those without.

Reveal looked at records from 28 Amazon warehouses in 16 states and found that the overall rate of serious injuries was more than double the warehousing industry average. Amazon has countered it's misleading to compare its rate with rivals because of the company's "aggressive stance on recording injuries no matter how big or small."

The Reveal report also found a correlation between robots and safety problems, such as in Tracy, Calif., where the serious injury rate nearly quadrupled in the four years after robots were introduced.

Amazon hasn't disclosed how its safety record at robot-powered warehouses compares to those without. But company officials remain optimistic that Amazon workers are adapting to the new technology.



Amazon is using new models descended from the Kiva line, including the Pegasus, a squat vehicle with a conveyor belt on top.

NATION

Flood spurs tiny town to consider moving

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

WINSLOW, Neb. — It took only minutes for the icy Elkhorn River to surge over a levee and engulf tiny Winslow, but months after the floodwaters receded, the village finds itself struggling to decide its future — or if it has a future.

Will it be reborn atop a nearby hill, or will the town stay put, living under a dark cloud?

"It's never flooded like that before," said Bill Whitley, 72, who owns a house where his daughter lives in town. "But it will someday again."

This town of about 100 residents is one of a growing number that may face the choice of moving or dying as climate change worsens flood risks, leaving people who have lived for years through nature's extremes to accept that their hometowns may no longer be habitable where they are.

Since the creation of a buyout program in 1989, federal and local governments have poured more than \$5 billion into buying tens of thousands of properties threatened by persistent flooding to avoid the need for frequent rebuilding.

Many residents have agreed to move to other places, but still rare is the relocation of entire towns.

But that's the choice Winslow now has before it, and more may follow. While 30 years of buyouts would seemingly have addressed all the most threatened places, climate change is now putting even more towns into danger from rising tides and heavier storms.

Meanwhile, state and federal authorities have imposed restrictions on disaster aid that make it harder for them to rebuild after flooding.

"I would say our current weather pattern is making it difficult if you're living in a flood plain area," said Bryan Tuma, assistant director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

It's unclear how many communities in recent years have been reclassified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency into higher-risk flood zones, but a 2013 FEMA-funded study found the amount of land vulnerable to extreme river flooding would likely increase by 45% by the end of the century.



Bill Whitley, rear, listens at a town hall meeting at the fire hall, on Oct. 24 in Winslow, Neb., where relocating the village was discussed.

PHOTOS BY NATI HARNIK/AP

Winslow residents must raise their homes, leave or restart the town at a site a few miles away and 100 feet higher with government financial help.

"We are going to flood again," said Winslow village trustee and volunteer fire chief Zachary Klein, who is leading a relocation effort.

Winslow was incorporated 110 years ago about 40 miles from Omaha, a half-mile south of the Elkhorn River; most residents are farmers or blue-collar workers.

They've occasionally had to deal with rising water. But nothing like the last decade, when nine of the 10 highest crests ever have been recorded, including the worst of all in March.

Torrential rains falling on frozen ground poured into the river and sent the normally lazy



Buildings are seen in Winslow, where a swift-moving flood ravaged the tiny town this spring.

stream surging into the town and inundating thousands of acres of farmland.

Other towns along Midwest rivers also flooded, but as spring stretched into summer, most at least started to recover.

Winslow, though, looks like a ghost town, with its gravel streets empty and its 48 homes and businesses posted with official warnings against entering.

With many towns pleading for higher levees, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has no plans to invest millions to upgrade Winslow's.

"Even the Corps can't afford to build up levees everywhere," said Rob Moore, an analyst with the Chicago-based environmental group the Natural Resources Defense Council.

So local leaders found land

about 3 miles away on a hilltop and negotiated a price. Klein hopes to have the purchase finalized by February so crews can begin putting in infrastructure, initially along a single street. Houses would be built or moved in, starting as soon as late next year.

They would come the community structures "that make a town a town," Klein said — including a community center, post office, fire station and even Smiley's, the town's only bar.

A handful of other towns have been transplanted over the years, including Soldiers Grove, Wis., in 1983 and Valmeyer, Ill., in 1993. The big question is whether enough Winslow residents will commit to moving to make it worthwhile.

About 25 households — or half

of Winslow — have signed on so far. Those who don't move to the new town can take a buyout, which covers 75% of a structure's pre-flood market value and move elsewhere.

Or they can stay, although they would have to elevate their property at considerable cost to get flood insurance.

At a recent meeting, more than 50 people gathered to ask questions. Final decisions must be made by spring.

Ken Rice, who is repairing his nearly 85-year-old home and hopes to move it to the new site, said it's hard to imagine the village dissolving.

"This is home to me," Rice, 57, said. "I've lived here all my life."

Nilena Parker has lived in Winslow only two years but said she's ready to rebuild "up top," as residents call the new site.

"I can't afford to do anything else," she said.

But at least three households have decided to stay in the old Winslow, even if that means paying a hefty price.

Fran Geisler and her husband will have to raise their house more than four feet and get an above-ground septic tank. Some of the outbuildings and farm equipment will remain at risk of flooding.

Nevertheless, "this is home," she said. "I've lived here 33 years. My husband has lived here all his life. We just couldn't live any other place."



Volunteer fire department chief and village trustee Zachary Klein, left, briefs residents during a town hall meeting.

FAITH

A silent revival

At Episcopal church for the deaf, faith flourishes without sound

BY LUIS ANDRES HENAO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Lord's Prayer ended with the bang of dozens of fists that landed on open palms after a circular motion and a thumbs up in a joint "Amen!"

Not a voice could be heard inside the cavernous sanctuary of Holyrood Episcopal Church-Iglesia Santa Cruz in Manhattan. There was no need for words: From the altar, the deaf congregants led the hearing ones — who from the wooden pews repeated the silent movement of their hands.

Music, sermons, prayers, even confessions make up much of the experience of a typical religious service. So, for the deaf, how does faith flourish in an environment that so revolves around sound?

During a recent Sunday service, deaf and hearing worshippers sung and signed hymns, offered the sign of peace bringing palms together with a twisting motion — and joyfully waved their hands high in the air in a sign-language equivalent of applause.

"When I sign the music and the hymns to God, I actually feel the Holy spirit with me. I give my all to him," said Lidia Martinez, 54, who spoke to the Associated Press through her daughter, who is a sign language interpreter.

Growing up in the Dominican Republic, Martinez felt alienated from her faith because she was deaf. When she moved to the U.S. in 1993, she continued to feel like an outsider in a hearing church.

"I remember going to other churches and sitting in the benches and not knowing what they were saying because there were no interpreters available," she said. "It was really hard to follow the Mass with just the readings."

After visiting multiple churches, she walked into Holyrood last year. That's when she saw the Rev. Maria Santivago signing from the pulpit.

"It was heartwarming to have her interpret the Mass," she said about Santivago, a 77-year-old Paraguayan who came out of retirement to help lead the ministry for the deaf. "Before I wasn't understanding anything. This was like a Eureka moment."

Now, her whole family is part of the Holyrood community. They recently walked into the church past the Nativity scene and a brightly lit Christmas tree and sat in the front pews, illuminated by sunlight from colorful stained-glass windows. Her husband, Carlos Tirado, 54, who is also deaf, signed. Her daughter Leisha Martinez, 11, and her granddaughters, Arly Gordon, 8, and Lyana Gordon, 4, who can hear, sang along.

Facing them — and all the deaf worshippers — stood her eldest daughter, Diely Martinez, an American Sign Language/Spanish medical interpreter, who now volunteers at the Sunday Mass.

"I want (God) to touch their lives, she said. "So, it's more than interpreting. It's a calling."



EMILY LEHNER/AP

During the service, the Rev. Luis Barrios asked the deaf and hearing worshippers to form a prayer chain around a congregant who fears that she's also losing her sight.

The Sunday service for the deaf and a weekday American Sign Language classes have helped once-dwindling attendance to rise at the Gothic Revival-style church.

"God can also be found in the silence," Santivago said. "We're empowering their language."

Holyrood, which is located in the mostly Latino neighborhood of Washington Heights, also takes pride in being a sanctuary church for immigrants and fully trilingual in English, Spanish and ASL.

"We have revived this church. We wanted the church to support the people," Barrios, who is from Puerto Rico, said. "We need to find ways to make changes so the church remains relevant." He said that they still hope to reach out to more children and teenagers.

Technological advances, including apps for texting and talking, continue to help the deaf and hard of hearing worldwide. But, Diely Martinez said, a church for the deaf and hearing — like Holyrood — is vital.

"Every Sunday, we come here and we're a family. It can be deaf friends; it can be my immediate family. But not only that," she said. "I can see how the hearing people are more accepting of the deaf, and that's very touching. They come together."



From top: Diely Martinez, 30, prays inside the Holyrood Episcopal Church-Iglesia Santa Cruz in the Washington Heights neighborhood in New York City last month. The Rev. Maria Santivago, left, signs the sermon for deaf worshippers at the church. Deaf worshippers Carlos Tirado, left, and Lidia Martinez, second from left, sign in response to a sermon.

PHOTOS BY JESSIE WARDAKS/AP

NATION

Fishery rebounds in conservation 'home run'

Bottom trawler fishermen making comeback in waters off the West Coast

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

WARRENTON, Ore. — A rare environmental success story is unfolding in waters off the West Coast.

After years of fear and uncertainty, bottom trawler fishermen — those who use nets to catch rockfish, bocaccio, sole, Pacific Ocean perch and other deep-dwelling fish — are making a comeback here, reinventing themselves as a sustainable industry less than two decades after authorities closed huge stretches of the Pacific Ocean because of the species' depletion.

The ban devastated fishermen, but as of Jan. 1, regulators reopened an area roughly three times the size of Rhode Island off Oregon and California to groundfish bottom trawling — all with the approval of environmental groups that were once the industry's biggest foes.

The rapid turnaround is made even more unique by the collaboration between the fishermen and environmentalists who spent years refining a long-term fishing plan that will continue to resuscitate the groundfish industry while permanently protecting thousands of square miles of reefs and coral beds that benefit the overfished species.

Now, the fishermen who see their livelihood returning must solve another piece of the puzzle: drumming up consumer demand for fish that haven't been in grocery stores or on menus for a generation.

"It's really a conservation home run," said Shems Jud, regional director for the Environmental Defense Fund's ocean program. "The recovery is decades ahead of schedule. It's the biggest environmental story that no one knows about."

The process also netted a win for conservationists concerned about the future of extreme deepwater habitats where bottom trawlers currently don't go. A tract of ocean the size of New Mexico with waters up to 2.1 miles deep will be off-limits to bottom-trawling to protect deep-sea corals and sponges just now being discovered.

"Not all fishermen are rappers of the environment. When you hear the word 'trawler,' very often that's associated with destruction of the sea and pillaging," said Kevin Dunn, whose trawler Iron Lady was featured in a Whole Foods television commercial about sustainable fishing.

Groundfish is a catch-all term that refers to dozens of species that live on, or near, the bottom of the Pacific off the West Coast. Trawling vessels drag weighted



PHOTOS BY GILLIAN FLACCUS/AP

A worker sorts fish being unloaded from a bottom trawler containing rockfish and other groundfish species in Warrenton, Ore., last month.



Kevin Dunn, who fishes off the coasts of Oregon and Washington, holds an aurora rockfish at a processing facility in Warrenton, Ore.

nets to scoop up as many fish as possible, but that can also damage critical rocky underwater habitat.

The groundfish fishery hasn't always struggled. Starting in 1976, the federal government subsidized the construction of domestic fishing vessels to lock down U.S. interests in West Coast waters, and by the 1980s, that investment paid off. Bottom trawling was booming, with 500 vessels in California, Oregon and Washington hauling in 200 million pounds of non-whiting overfished fish a year. Unlike Dungeness crab and salmon, groundfish could be harvested year-round, providing an economic backbone for ports.

But in the late 1990s, scientists began to sound the alarm about dwindling fish stocks.

Just nine of the more than 90 groundfish species were in

trouble, but because of the way bottom trawlers fished — indiscriminately hauling up millions of pounds of whatever their nets encountered — regulators began to halt all bottom trawling. Multiple species of rockfish, slow-growing creatures with spiny fins and colorful names like canary, darkspotted and yellow eye, were the hardest hit.

By 2005, trawlers brought in just one-quarter of the haul of the 1980s. The fleet is now down to 75 boats, said Brad Pettinger, former director of the Oregon Trawl Commission who was key in developing the plan to reopen fishing grounds.

"We really wiped out the industry for a number of years," Pettinger said. "To get those things up and going again is not easy."

In 2011, trawlers were assigned quotas for how many of each species they could catch. If they

went over, they had to buy quota from other fishermen in a system reminiscent of a carbon cap-and-trade model.

Mandatory independent observers, paid by the trawlers, accompanied the vessels and hand-counted their haul.

Fishermen quickly learned to avoid areas heavy in off-limits species and began innovating to net fewer banned fish.

Surveys soon showed groundfish rebounding — in some cases, 50 years faster than predicted and accidental trawling of overfished species fell by 80%. The Marine Stewardship Council certified 13 species in the fishery as sustainable in 2014, and five more followed last year.

As the quota system's success became apparent, environmentalists and trawlers began to talk. Regulators would soon revisit the trawling rules, and the two sides wanted a voice.

They met more than 30 times, slowly building trust as they crafted a proposal. Trawlers brought maps developed over generations, alerted environmentalists to reefs they didn't know about, and even shared proprietary tow paths.

"All we could do on our end is make a good-faith offer, and I really credit the guys in the industry for taking that up," said Seth Atkinson, an attorney with the nonprofit Natural Resources Defense Council. "These were tough compromises."

Last year, regulators approved a plan to reopen the 17-year-old Rockfish Conservation Area off Oregon and California, while banning future trawling in extreme-depth waters and making off-limits some habitat dubbed

essential to fish reproduction, including a large area off Southern California.

"A fair number of fishermen thought it was a good deal and if it was going to happen, it was better for them to participate than not," said Tom Libby, a fish processor who was instrumental in crafting the agreement. "It's right up there with the best and most rewarding things in my career — and I've been at it 50 years."

Some groups, like Oceana, wanted even more protections from bottom trawling, which it calls the "most damaging fishing method to seafloor habitats off the West Coast." In a news release, the group emphasized that the agreement it did get safeguards 90% of the seafloor in U.S. waters off the West Coast.

Even so, with fragile species rebounding, trawlers could harvest as much as 120 million pounds a year, but there's only demand for about half that much. That's because groundfish have been replaced in stores by farmed, foreign species like tilapia.

A trade association called Positively Groundfish is trying to change that by touring food festivals and culinary trade shows, evangelizing to chefs and seafood buyers about the industry's rebound and newfound sustainability. They give out samples, too.

"We are treating this almost like a new product for which you have to build awareness — but we do have a great story," said Jana Hennig, the association's executive director. "People are so surprised to hear that not everything is doom and gloom, but that it's possible that you can manage a fishery so well that it actually bounces back to abundance."



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NATION

Traditional parenting won't work here

Adoption requires special care due to kids' challenging backgrounds

BY TAYLOR TIAMOY HARRIS
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

CLAYTON, Mo. — As Geri Brotherton enters the St. Louis County Courthouse on a Wednesday morning in November, her hands are full and her mind is busy. Her husband, a lawyer and a social worker add to at least seven of her children walking beside her.

Two little girls in matching white shirts and denim shirts, their hair in braids and barrettes, can't contain their excitement as they race up and down the hallway outside a courtroom.

They're the reason the Brothertons are at the courthouse. After they're adopted in the next few minutes, the two girls, siblings ages 5 and 7, will be Brothertons themselves.

Courthouses are so often the scene of sorrow and despair. But for the Brothertons, the room is filled with giggles, laughter and joy as the judge hands the newest and youngest Brotherton girls teddy bears.

"Do you have the ability to maintain properly, care for and educate these adorable little girls?" asks Karen Siegel, the Brothertons' attorney.

"Yes!" says Brotherton, along with her husband and both girls, who made sure they weren't left out of any moment in court.

The adoption is now final; the children she's taken care of since they were babies are legally hers.

"The real work starts now," says Brotherton, who has adopted nine children and fostered more than 200 since the 1970s. Her wealth of experience at age 70 has taught her that the legal proceeding is a beginning, not a conclusion.

And whether or not it applies to her newest daughters, she knows that most children who are adopted or enter foster care, no matter how young, have traumatic histories.

In addition to being a foster parent and adoptive parent, Brotherton leads a class with Family Forward, a nonprofit group that helps parents understand their children's trauma and how it affects them and the child.

A new session of Brotherton's class started last month, and about 10 parents settled into a classroom one Tuesday evening to discuss "parenting kids in difficult situations."

They may have been strangers, but it wasn't long before they shared a common denominator: the challenges of being a foster or adoptive parent.

"They come to your house and you tell them to trust you, and things will be different now, but think about it. What do they have to base that on?" said Gail Knipshild, one of the instructors.

Some of those in the class had just taken in a grandchild or family member's child, temporarily or permanently. While they could cite plenty of positives about these children, they acknowledged that many of them were being disruptive and disobedient at home, cursing, acting out in school, stealing and being manipulative. The chil-



PHOTOS BY ROBERT COHEN, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/AP

Kimora Brotherton, 7, visits with her mother Geri as her family has a celebratory lunch at a Bridgeton Chick-fil-A after officially adopting Kimora and her sister Marissa on Nov. 6.



Left: Ashley Brotherton, left, talks with her new sister Marissa, 5, as the Brotherton family gathers to have their photo taken with Commissioner Heather R. Cunningham following the official adoption.

Right: Marissa, left, and Kimora Brotherton enjoy candy and stuffed animals given to them as they sit with their father Bill Brotherton.

den had endured sexual assault, domestic violence and more.

"They are survivors first and foremost," Knipshild said. "The thrust of this class is (that) we're looking at you changing, not them. Traditional parenting is not going to work."

Adoptions have been on the rise in the St. Louis area. About 160 adoptions were finalized in St. Louis and St. Louis County in 2018, the highest number since 2014.

And more than 700 children were admitted to foster homes in 2018, according to the latest annual report from Missouri's Children's Division. The average age of the new foster children was 8.

A 10-year analysis from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System shows that after a child's second birthday, the chance of being adopted begins to decrease. But the need for caring adults remains, and foster parents fill a vital role. Siegel knows of one foster parent who only takes in teenagers and welcomes the challenge.

After having children, one St. Louis County couple decided to become foster parents to provide families under stress with a "break and breathing room."

Although they didn't anticipate adopting, the 6-and-7-year-olds fit perfectly in their family of four. The couple's plans changed.

"With any child in the foster care system, they have not come out of consistent parenting, structured parenting," the children's adoptive mother said. "They've experienced trauma. So to come into a healthy home for them, it's a bit of a shock all the way around because that wasn't their normal." The mother did not want to be identified by name to protect her children.

The adjustment took patience and empathy, not only from both parents but from their biological children as well. Such random things as a fork, peach pie, scissors and glue were among items that triggered outbursts in their new children or sent them hiding behind chairs.

The couple compared the children to war

veterans coming home with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Despite training, the couple said they were not fully prepared to handle the situation. So they switched things up. Instead of timeouts, there was "time in" because they realized the children needed to be with them more, not less. They also enlisted the help of therapists who gave them tools such as breathing exercises that helped the children with anxiety. The couple continued taking classes with Family Forward. The experience has been richly rewarding.

"They're kids from really hard places, so it doesn't always come with a pretty package and a bow, but man, they're some of the toughest fighters and biggest survivors and overcomers," the mother said. "Whether you adopt kids or have them in your home for 72 hours or three weeks or three months with no expectations of appreciation or thanks, you're planting seeds."



WORLD

French rail strikes reach milestone 29th day

Associated Press

PARIS — With 29 straight days of walkouts, French rail strikes against government plans to reform France's retirement system marked a new milestone Thursday, surpassing even the lengths of strikes in the 1980s.

The nationwide walkouts against the government's pension plans started Dec. 5. On Thursday, they surpassed a 1986-1987 rail strike in longevity, a walkout that lasted 28 days at the SNCF national rail company.

The current strikes have crippled train and metro services in Paris and across the country over the Christmas-New Year period and continue to cause severe disruptions.

The SNCF said half of its vaunted high-speed trains weren't running on Thursday. Only two automated lines were running normally in the Paris Metro, with

services spotty or non-existent across the rest of the network.

Unions are gearing up for further walkouts next week, when French schools reopen and negotiations are set to resume with the government.

In a televised New Year address on Tuesday, French President Emmanuel Macron reaffirmed his commitment to the pension overhaul but urged his government to "find the path of a quick compromise" with unions.

Macron stayed firm on the principles of the reform, including its most-decried measure: raising the eligibility age for full pensions from 62 to 64. He insisted the new system will be fairer to all French workers and will be financially sustainable. The plan aims to unite dozens of separate pension systems into one and eliminate special deals that let some French transit workers retire in their 50s.



A woman pushes her bike at Gare Saint Lazar train station during the 29th day of transport strikes in Paris, Thursday. The start of 2020 was the second New Year celebration in a row where French President Emmanuel Macron has faced social upheaval.

MICHEL EULER/AP



MARCEL KUSCH, DPA/AP

A woman lights a candle at the main entrance of the zoo in Krefeld, Germany, on Thursday.

3 women investigated for deadly German zoo blaze

Associated Press

Three women are under investigation for launching paper sky lanterns for New Year's that apparently ignited a devastating fire at a German zoo, killing more than 30 animals, officials said Thursday.

The three local women — a mother and her two daughters, ages 30 to 60 — went to police in the western city of Krefeld on New Year's Day after authorities held a news conference about the blaze, criminal police chief Gerd Hoppmann said.

The women are being investigated on suspicion of negligent arson, prosecutor Jens Frobel said. The offense can carry a prison sentence of up to five years.

Many Germans welcome in the new year legally with fireworks at midnight. Sky lanterns, however, are both illegal and unusual in Germany. The mini hot-air balloons made of paper have been used in Asia for centuries.

The fire started in a corner of the ape house's roof and spread rapidly. The zoo near the Dutch border says the ape house burned down and more than 30 animals — including five orangutans, two gorillas, a chimpanzee and several monkeys — were killed, as well as fruit bats and birds.

Firefighters were only able to rescue two chimpanzees. The zoo said Thursday it was satisfied with their condition.

Hoppmann said the women had ordered five sky lanterns on the internet and told authorities that they hadn't known they were illegal in Germany. He added that there was nothing in the product description showing that they were banned.

Hoppmann described the women as "completely normal people who seemed very sensible, very responsible" and said it was "very courageous" of them to come forward, saving authorities a tricky investigation. He added that they fear reprisals.



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WORLD

Many flee, prep before Australian fires can worsen

BY TRISTAN LAVALETTE
Associated Press

PERTH, Australia — Thousands of tourists fled Australia's wildfire-ravaged eastern coast Thursday ahead of worsening conditions as the military started to evacuate people trapped on the shore further south.

Cooler weather since Tuesday has aided firefighting and allowed people to replenish supplies. Vehicles formed long lines at gas stations and supermarkets, and traffic was gridlocked as highways reopened. But fire conditions were expected to deteriorate Saturday as high temperatures and strong winds are forecast to return.

"There is every potential that the conditions on Saturday will be as bad or worse than we saw" on Tuesday, New South Wales Rural Fire Service Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers said.

Authorities said 381 homes had been destroyed on the New South Wales southern coast this week and at least eight people have died this week in the state and neighboring Victoria, Australia's two most-populous states, where more than 200 fires are currently burning.

fires have also been burning in Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

The early and devastating start to Australia's summer wildfires has led authorities to rate this season the worst on record. About 12.35 million acres of land have been burned, at least 17 people have been killed and more than 1,400 homes have been destroyed.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the crisis was likely to last for months.

"It will continue to go on until we can get some decent rain that can deal with some of the fires that have been burning for many, many months," Morrison told reporters on Thursday.

New South Wales authorities on

Thursday morning ordered tourists to leave a 155-mile zone along the picturesque south coast.

State Transport Minister Andrew Constance said it is the "largest mass relocation of people out of the region that we've ever seen."

New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian declared a seven-day state of emergency starting Friday, which grants the New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner more control and power.

It's the third state of emergency for New South Wales in the past two months, after previously not being implemented since 2013.

"We don't take these decisions lightly but we also want to make sure we're taking every single precaution to be prepared for what could be a horrible day of Saturday," Berejiklian said.

A statewide total fire ban will be in place on Friday and Saturday.

In Victoria, where 83 homes have burned this week, the military was helping thousands of people who fled to the shore as a wildfire threatened their homes Tuesday in the coastal town of Mallacoota.

Food, water, fuel and medical expertise were being delivered and about 500 people were going to be evacuated from the town by a naval ship.

"We think around 3,000 tourists and 1,000 locals are there. Not all of those will want to leave, not all can get the vessel at one time," Victoria Premier Daniel Andrews told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

A contingent of 30 firefighters from the United States and Canada landed in Melbourne on Thursday to help with the catastrophe.

Smoke from the wildfires made the air quality in the national capital, Canberra, the world's worst in a ranking index Thursday and was blowing into New Zealand.



FRANK AUGSTEIN/AP

London Zoo Census

A zookeeper counts the squirrel-monkeys during the annual stocktake at ZSL London Zoo in London, on Thursday. Caring for more than 500 different species, the zoo's keepers face the challenging task of tallying up every mammal, bird, reptile, fish and invertebrate at the Zoo.

Crash kills Taiwan's military chief

BY RALPH JENNINGS
Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan — Taiwan's top military official was among eight people killed in an air force helicopter crash in mountainous terrain outside Taipei on Thursday, the defense ministry said. Five others survived.

As chief of the general staff, Gen. Shen Yi-ming was responsible for overseeing the self-governing island's defense against China, which threatens to use

military force if necessary to annex what it considers part of its territory.

The helicopter was flying from Taipei to the nearby city of Yilan for a New Year's activity when it crashed. The victims included other senior military officials and the two pilots.

The UH-60M Black Hawk with 13 people on board dropped from the radar screen 10 minutes after takeoff from Songshan air force base around 7:50 a.m., Taiwan's defense ministry said. It went

down in the mountainous, heavily forested Wulai area southeast of the capital.

"He was very calm and very stable and unlike other army guys he was always smiling," Alexander Huang, a strategic studies professor at Tamkang University in Taiwan who had known Shen for a decade said.

A special government committee will look into the cause of the crash, a defense ministry statement said.

Japanese prosecutors raid Nissan ex-chair Ghosn's Tokyo home

BY YURI KAGEYAMA
Associated Press

TOKYO — Japanese prosecutors on Thursday raided the Tokyo home of former Nissan Chairman Carlos Ghosn after he skipped bail and fled to Lebanon before his trial on financial misconduct charges.

Tokyo prosecutors and police did not immediately comment. Japanese media showed investigators entering the home, which

was Ghosn's third residence in Tokyo since he was first arrested a year ago. Authorities have now searched each one.

It is unclear how Ghosn avoided the tight surveillance he was under in Japan and showed up in Lebanon.

Ghosn said Tuesday in a statement that he left for Lebanon because he thought the Japanese judicial system was unjust, and he wanted to avoid "political

persecution."

He said he would talk to reporters next week.

Japan does not have an extradition treaty with Lebanon.

Lebanon has said Ghosn entered the country legally, and there was no reason to take action against him.

The Japanese minister for presidential affairs, Seim Jirei-sai, told the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper that Ghosn entered legally at

the airport with a French passport and Lebanese ID.

Ghosn's lawyers in Japan said they had no knowledge of the escape and they had all his passports.

Ghosn has French, Lebanese and Brazilian citizenship.

Japanese public broadcaster NHK TV, without identifying sources, reported Thursday that Ghosn had two French passports.

Turkish state-run Anadolu Agency said Thursday that Turkish

authorities had detained seven people as part of an investigation into how Ghosn fled to Lebanon via Istanbul.

Ghosn, who was charged in Japan with under-reporting his future compensation and breach of trust, has repeatedly asserted his innocence, saying authorities trumped up charges to prevent a possible merger between Nissan Motor Co. and alliance partner Renault SA.

WEEKEND



100% THAT PICK

Breakout star Lizzo voted
Entertainer of the Year
by The Associated Press

PLUS, A LOOK BACK AT THE BEST OF THE 2010s

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WEEKEND: POP CULTURE OF THE DECADE

Lasting impact

From 'Game of Thrones' to 'Hamilton'; the pop-culture debuts of the decade

By TRAVIS M. ANDREWS

The Washington Post

From the rise of the #MeToo movement to the dominance of streaming services to the power of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the biggest pop culture stories from the 2010s will probably affect the cultural landscape for many years. So, rather than look at the most singular moments from the past 10 years, we picked the most impactful debuts of the decade.

'Game of Thrones'

By 1956, most Americans owned a television and watched the same programs at the same time. Many of them would discuss an episode the next day at work, while loitering around the water cooler. If it were any other decade, GoT probably would have been just another of those shows.

But the rise of the internet/streaming changed everything forever, and now an overwhelming majority of people have some sort of easy access to every television show ever created (if not an actual television). So for a series to capture up to 20 million viewers per episode in today's media landscape seems nearly impossible. Sure, the finale left many of those viewers disappointed, but they watched, and that's what counts.

The 'living album'

When iTunes debuted in 2001, critics argued the very fabric of the music industry was forever changed. And while that might have been correct, a much more seismic shift in the way we listen to our tunes was en route. Streaming existed before this decade — Spotify debuted in 2008, Pandora in 2005 — but one moment showed how deeply it affected what we actually listen to: the debut of the "living album."

That's a cute phrase given to the idea that, with streaming services, an artist can change an album even after it's available to the public. The concept entered the mainstream when Kanye West premiered "The Life of Pablo" in 2016, only to release a slightly different version a few days later.

Netflix creating original content

In 2013, Netflix released every episode of "House of Cards," "Orange Is the New Black" and "Hemlock Grove," three original productions, all at once. These shows hit the industry like an atomic bomb, permanently changing the way we consume television. Suddenly, waiting for a new episode each week seemed antiquated. TV was now meant to be consumed in eight- or 10-hour blocks, and the way shows were structured was altered to reflect that.

Then, with the ashes of traditional TV in its wake, Netflix turned its attention to disrupting the movie industry. The result? The resurgence of the rom-com with movies such as "Set It Up" and "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," along with a streaming service entering awards conversation for the first time after funding famed directors' passion projects — such as "Roma" by Alfonso Cuarón and "The Irishman" by Martin Scorsese — that studios wouldn't take a financial risk on. The

big trade-off, of course, is that the service wants you to watch these movies at home, which only adds fuel to the flames dancing on whatever's left of movie theaters.

The 'new' Beyoncé

Beyoncé didn't need to change a thing. The pop star had already won the game by 2013, so she decided to change the rules and create a new one. She surprise released her self-titled album that year, and did the same three years later with "Lemonade," which included an album-length music video.

No longer was she hiding behind the mask of fame. Suddenly she put everything on display, from her then-embattled marriage with Jay-Z to her fury at the systemic racism crippling the country as evidenced by the deaths of black men such as Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown and Eric Garner. While other pop stars, such as Taylor Swift, became almost self-parodic by trying to appease every possible audience, Beyoncé rafted her pop music with the power of punk, following her own muse at all costs. She risked losing the culture entirely; instead, she ended up dominating it.

The first 'Avengers' movie

The first inkling that superhero movies would dominate the box office along with our collective consciousness appeared in 2008, the year of "Iron Man" and "The Dark Knight." Both hits, they proved superheroes could be big business. But 2012's "The Avengers," which brought several characters together in one movie, arguably altered the industry by taking major cues from television. Marvel made movies episodic and intertwined in a way that never before existed. Each installment in the MCU isn't merely a sequel or a prequel but part of a larger jigsaw puzzle, the piecing together of which requires a fan to watch every single movie — and even stick around for the credits.

As the manner in which we consume film and TV continue to merge, it's a strategy that feels natural in the streaming era. At the same time, it's smart business. Once a fan has invested dozens of hours watching movies that feature individual heroes, they're more likely to plunk down a few bucks to see them all team up. Case in point: 2019's "Avengers: Endgame" became the highest-grossing movie ever at the global box office, earning \$2.8 billion.

Internet culture becomes pop culture

For the early part of the millennium, popular culture and Internet culture coexisted like two cousins who interacted a good bit but clearly came from different families. In the last 10 years, though, the



THE PUBLIC THEATER/AP

"Hamilton" made the show's creator, Lin-Manuel Miranda, a household name.



HELEN SLOAN/HBO

Emilia Clarke as Daenerys Targaryen in the last season of "Game of Thrones"



GARETH CATERMOLE/Getty Images for Disney

Beyoncé already was a hitmaker, but she became a cultural force in the 2010s.



WILL HEATH/NBC

Alec Baldwin landed a notable role as Donald Trump on "Saturday Night Live."

existing stories and style of these universes is a singular accomplishment, and only adds to our anticipation of Coogler's upcoming "Wrong Answer," written by Ta-Nehisi Coates.

'Hamilton'

If it's that difficult to convince masses of people to watch the same TV show or pack into the same movie theater at the same time, imagine the barrier to entry when it comes to the stage. Now imagine that the play is a hip-hop-inspired musical about the life of founding father Alexander Hamilton.

"Hamilton" debuted in summer 2015 and almost immediately made its creator Lin-Manuel Miranda a household name. The show so enraptured the country that its tickets became the most expensive in theater history, going for an average of \$1,200 (with at least one going for close to \$10,000) and earning multiple millions each week. The soundtrack broke records, hitting 150 weeks in the Billboard Top 40 last year and peaking on the rap charts. The show even earned the admiration of President Barack Obama, who invited the cast to the White House.

Alec Baldwin's Trump impersonation

Donald Trump has long been a pop culture figure, both a celebrity in his own right and the constant butt of the joke. But he was mostly harmless, just someone with funny hair and a bunch of towers bearing his name like some comic book villain.

Things, of course, have changed. Love him or loathe him, ever since he rode down that escalator in 2015, he became the center of American discourse and, as a result, the center of American art. Particularly comedy. Which is why after four decades in Hollywood, Alec Baldwin might now be better known for his (arguably bad) Trump impression than on "SNL" than for "Glengarry Glen Ross." Baldwin's take represented one in a flood of impressions from essentially every comedian with a television show, but his became the most totemic (and earned the ire of the president himself).

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

Cuz they love her

B

The Associated Press bestows top honor on singer-rapper Lizzo



Lizzo performs on Sept. 25 in Washington. The singer-rapper dropped her major-label debut, "Cuz I Love You," featuring songs like "Good as Hell" and the empowerment anthem "Truth Hurts" in 2019. She also became the leading nominee for the Grammys with eight.

Brent N. Clarke, Invision/AP

Breakthrough singer-rapper Lizzo has been named Entertainer of the Year by The Associated Press.

Voted by entertainment staffers of the news cooperative, Lizzo dominated the pop, R&B and rap charts in 2019 with songs like "Truth Hurts" and "Good as Hell." Though she released her first album in 2013, Lizzo dropped her major-label debut, "Cuz I Love You," this year and the success has made her the leading nominee at the 2020 Grammy Awards, where she is up for eight honors.

"I'm doing the same things — hard work, dedication, touring constantly — but now everybody is looking," Lizzo told the Los Angeles Times last month. "Everyone's just now paying attention."

Outside of music, Lizzo has won over fans for promoting body positivity and denouncing fat shaming.

"When you're in the room with her, she makes you feel good. She radiates," songwriter-producer Ricky Reed, who signed Lizzo to his Atlantic Records imprint, Nice Life, in 2015, told the Los Angeles Times last month. "The reason she has connected is that her music is so infused with her message. It's a real-time, blow-by-blow of her life."

Her live performances have been revered, and the 31-year-old classically trained flutist grinded as an independent and touring artist for years. She performed with Prince on his 2014 "Plectrumelectrum" album, released two years before his death.

Lizzo also had a role in the film "Hustlers," opposite Jennifer Lopez, Constance Wu and Cardi B, and she voiced a character in the animated picture "UglyDolls."

Previous AP Entertainer of the Year winners have included Lin-Manuel Miranda, Adele, Taylor Swift, Jennifer Lawrence, Lady Gaga, Tina Fey and Betty White.

Streaming giant Netflix was chosen for the award in 2018.

Lizzo also was named Entertainer of the Year by Time magazine.

— The Associated Press

WEEKEND: POP CULTURE OF THE DECADE – MOVIES

TOP FILMS OF THE 2010s

BY LINDSEY BAHR
AND JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

The last 10 years will probably go down as the decade of Marvel's domination and Netflix's ascension. But despite all the tumult and the perpetual rumors of cinema's supposed demise, good stuff — no, great stuff — kept getting made.

It can be harder to find. Mega-blockbusters suck up most of the big screens and the small ones are increasingly crowded with infinite choice. Yet the medium is as vibrant as ever, thanks to the influx of new voices (though still not enough of them) and the undying need of filmmakers to tell stories with light and sound. The movies abide.

The impossibility of an exercise like this is only a reminder of just how very alive cinema is. The next 50 movies on our list, or yours, might be just as good.



FOX SEARCHLIGHT/AP

Brad Pitt is pictured in a scene from director Terrence Malick's ambitious, experimental 2011 epic, "Tree of Life."

2. 'Phantom Thread'

Paul Thomas Anderson was already having an incredible decade with "The Master," from 2012 and "Inherent Vice," from 2014. Then, three years later, "Phantom Thread" came along and with its lush haute couture, blushing heroine, ornery genius and poison mushrooms, he somehow blew all the others out of the water. Anderson made a black romantic comedy for his eighth feature but imbued it with enough prestige dressings to elevate it above such a "pedestrian" form.

— Lindsey Bahr



A24/AP

Saoirse Ronan, above, is a high school senior at odds with her hometown in Greta Gerwig's "Lady Bird."

3. 'Margaret'

Kenneth Lonergan's other two, also exceptional, features ("You Can Count on Me," "Manchester by the Sea") are better known partly because "Margaret" was tied up for years in a legal battle and an editing nightmare. But Lonergan's longer cut (not what was briefly released in theaters but what's available on DVD) is a New York masterwork of great depth and scope. A teenager (Anna Paquin) comes to question everything after witnessing a traffic death. Culminating with an embrace in a theater (with an extraordinary J. Smith-Cameron), "Margaret" is about a self-centered young woman awakening to the dramas all around her.

— Coyle



A24/AP

Mahershala Ali, left, and Alex Hibbert are two of the reasons "Moonlight" shines so brightly.

5. 'Moonlight'

Barry Jenkins' coming-of-age tale is separated into three sections — "Lit- tle," "Chiron" and "Black" — but its lyricism, beauty and ache is undivided. There's a haunting, even radical intimacy to "Moonlight." Years later, Chiron feels like someone you once met and will know forever. The movie's soft blue light shines and shines and shines.

— Coyle

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

WEEKEND: MOVIES



FOCUS FEATURES/AP

Stephen Dorff and Elle Fanning, right, are shown in a scene from Sofia Coppola's "Somewhere."

6. 'Somewhere'

Writer-director Sofia Coppola has always been able to see the dreamy banality in the sensational, whether it's in the life of Marie Antoinette, the suicides of five sisters, or, in the case of "Somewhere," the life of a movie star (Stephen Dorff) living in the most tabloid-ridden hotel in Los Angeles: the Chateau Marmont. Quiet and restrained and with the roads and cars and excess of Los Angeles as the backdrop, "Somewhere" gazes in on a father coming to the realization that very soon his almost teenage daughter (Elle Fanning) won't need him at all. It's neither cold nor depressing, however, but a warm-hearted look at the isolation, the silliness and even the universality of this rarefied world.

— Bahr

7. 'Cold War'

Pawel Pawlikowski made two staggering masterpieces in the last decade, both expressively black-and-white, both devastatingly taut. First was "Ida," then came "Cold War." It's a stunning back-to-back. The two films, so austere yet so expressive, feel like they come from another time. Choosing one isn't fair, but I gravitate more to "Cold War" for the sensual performances of Joanna Kulig and Tomasz Kot as lovers brought together and torn apart in postwar Poland. It's a romantic and bleak portrait of love and art under totalitarianism.

— Coyle



CBS Films

Oscar Isaac is the titular folk singer in "Inside Llewyn Davis."

9. 'Inside Llewyn Davis'

As they were in the two previous decades, the Coen brothers were as vital as any filmmaker over the past 10 years. Their output: "True Grit," "Hail, Caesar!," "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" and, most of all, this melancholy gem set in the Greenwich Village folk scene in the winter of 1961. The title character (Oscar Isaac) is a musician, recently made solo by the death of his singing partner, whose talent isn't quite enough, whose luck is lacking and whose cattawrangling abilities are definitely insufficient. Llewyn never catches a break. Thank God the Coens did.

— Coyle

10. 'The Grand Budapest Hotel'

Wes Anderson's precise and beautiful aesthetics have a way of becoming the only thing people talk about or seem to remember from his films, which is unfortunate because it's also something that can be weaponized against him. But "The Grand Budapest Hotel's" mastery is undeniable. Within this fun and sumptuous caper confection about a dandy concierge, Gustave H. (Ralph Fiennes), who presides over a splendid old-world hotel that is quickly becoming as much of a relic as his aristocratic-servant values, is an unexpectedly moving commentary on the last vestiges of civilization in a time between two dehumanizing world wars. It's the kind of film that has the audience yearning for and mourning something that never even really existed.

— Bahr



FOX SEARCHLIGHT/AP

From left: Paul Schlesinger, Tony Revolorio, Tilda Swinton and Ralph Fiennes are pictured in a scene from "The Grand Budapest Hotel."

Female-led 'Black Widow,' 'Wonder Woman 1984' are among '20's most anticipated

By NARDINE SAAD
Los Angeles Times

The future is female ... at least when it comes to the cineplex.

For the first time, four films starring and directed by women — "Wonder Woman 1984," Marvel's "Black Widow" and "Eternals" and Disney's live-action "Mulan" — topped a Fandango audience survey of the most anticipated movies of the new year, the film hub announced Dec. 27.

The movies, helmed by Patty Jenkins, Cate Shortland, Chloe Zhao and Niki Caro, respectively, were selected in an online survey conducted in the last weeks of December. More than 2,000 million-dollar films cast their votes for the top movies and performances they were most looking forward to seeing on the big screen in 2020.

Rounding out the top 10 are a bevy of sequels, spin-offs and adaptations, including the next James Bond installment ("No Time to Die"), John Krasinski's "A Quiet Place II," the female superhero team-up flick "Birds of Prey," the musical "In the Heights," Pixar's animated film "Soul" and the ninth chapter of the "Fast & Furious" franchise. "Soul," about a middle-school music teacher who dreams of playing at a New York jazz club, appears to be the only original fare.

But it's the "Wonder Woman" sequel that fans seem particularly stoked about, topping the most anticipated actress (Gal Gadot), actor (Chris Pine) and villain (Kristen Wiig) categories as well.

Here's how those four films fared and the other releases moviegoers can expect in the new year:



Gal Gadot

MOST ANTICIPATED MOVIE

"Wonder Woman 1984" (directed by Patty Jenkins, June 5)
"Black Widow" (Cate Shortland, May 1)
Marvel's "Eternals" (Chloe Zhao, Nov. 6)
"Mulan" (Niki Caro, March 27)
"No Time to Die" (Cary Joji Fukunaga, April 10)
"A Quiet Place Part II" (John Krasinski, March 20)
"Birds of Prey" (Cathy Yan, Feb. 7)
"In the Heights" (Jon M. Chu, June 26)
Pixar's "Soul" (Pete Docter and Kemp Powers, June 19)
"Fast & Furious 9" (Justin Lin, May 22)

MOST ANTICIPATED ACTRESS

Gal Gadot
("Wonder Woman 1984")
Scarlett Johansson
("Black Widow")
Emily Blunt ("A Quiet Place Part II," "Jungle Cruise")
Margot Robbie
("Birds of Prey")
Zendaya ("Dune")

MOST ANTICIPATED ACTOR

Chris Pine
("Wonder Woman 1984")
Paul Rudd
("Ghostbusters: Afterlife")
Ryan Reynolds ("Free Guy")
Daniel Craig
("No Time to Die")
Robert Downey Jr.
("Dolittle")

MOST ANTICIPATED FAMILY FILM

"Mulan"
Pixar's "Soul"
"Sonic the Hedgehog"
"Dolittle"
"Jungle Cruise"

MOST ANTICIPATED VILLAIN

Kristen Wiig as Cheetah
("Wonder Woman 1984")
2. Rami Malek as Safin
("No Time to Die")
3. Ewan McGregor as Black Mask ("Birds of Prey")
4. Jim Carrey as Dr. Ivo Robotnik
("Sonic the Hedgehog")
5. Charlize Theron as Cipher ("Fast & Furious 9")

MOST ANTICIPATED HORROR FILM

"A Quiet Place Part II"
"Halloween Kills"
"The Invisible Man"
"The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It"
"The Grudge"

MOST ANTICIPATED LIVE-ACTION COMEDY

"Ghostbusters: Afterlife"
"Bill & Ted Face the Music"
"Bad Boys For Life"
"Legally Blonde 3"
"The Lovebirds"

WEEKEND: MOVIES

No grudge against horror

Diversity of cast, flexibility of genre making 'Grudge' star John Cho rethink former bias

BY JAMI GANZ
New York Daily News

John Cho is breathing new life into a deadly story.

In the third version of "The Grudge," the "Harold & Kumar" star is trading in his comedy chops for a new kind of horror rooted in "very real adult grief."

"It was a drama, a cast of characters that was pretty much over 40, and it's just so unusual in movies today," Cho, 47, told the Daily News recently of his interest in the film, out Friday. "And I think that's what attracts me to the horror genre in general, late in life, is its ability to use the genre to do things that aren't being done in cinema right now."

"The Grudge" follows the 2004 film of the same name starring Sarah Michelle Gellar, and the 2002 Japanese film that inspired it, "Ju-On: The Grudge."

To prepare for his role, Cho was advised to check out the "Ju-On" franchise, to which this incarnation is "definitely an homage" and "pretty much directly connect(s)."

Ironically, Cho says he made a point of avoiding horror films for much of his life.

"I never wanted to purposely scare myself," he explained to The News. "That's why I stayed away from the horror genre for a long time, just had no desire to engage, even when my friends, you know as teenagers, were watching 'Friday the 13th' and 'Halloween,' I was not into it."

The "Searchers" star attributes his discomfort with the genre to his "very traumatic experience" of seeing "Death Ship 22" at just 6 years old, during his first trip to the movies.

"We had just moved to the United States from Korea," he explained, noting that Korea wasn't showing R-rated movies during those days. "Everything was sort of for general audiences."

The family quickly learned that American cinemas were very different.

"I was traumatized to see a woman murdered pretty gruesomely within the first couple minutes of the movie. But because we had paid the four bucks for the air conditioning, we did not leave," Cho recalled, adding with a laugh that his parents just covered his and his brother's eyes "whenever there was somebody getting killed. Or having sex. There was a lot of both on this death ship."

In 2017, Cho inched back toward the genre, with a role on the second season of Fox's anthology series "The Exorcist," a sequel to the 1973 film of the same name starring Linda Blair.

"One of the drivers (to be in that show) was the fact that Asian American faces are unusually absent from the horror genre," Cho explained.

But it was "Get Out," which premiered earlier in 2017, that truly changed things for the "Star Trek" actor and in fact, altered his "thinking about horror completely."

"What they were doing made me think about color also in the genre, which I hadn't thought about just because I was really disconnected from it," Cho said of the film, which mixes horror with social commentary on racial dynamics in 21st century America.

The diversity of "The Grudge" cast was certainly a factor in his taking on "The Grudge," Cho said, adding that he does "like injecting a face that looks like mine into a genre that has been pretty white, for the most part."

After "Get Out," which tipped him off to the "freaking interesting vehicle" that is the genre, Cho explained, "I really just started thinking about horror as it related to my career and thought, 'I'd love to do one of these, something like this.'"

A review was not available at press time.

"The Grudge" is rated R for disturbing violence and bloody images, terror and some language. Running time: 93 minutes.



Sony Pictures Entertainment

John Cho stars in "The Grudge," now in theaters.

Faith, conviction, sacrifice examined in 'A Hidden Life'

BY ANN HORNADAY
The Washington Post

In "A Hidden Life," Terrence Malick tells the little-known story of Franz Jägerstätter, a farmer living in Austria during World War II, who was executed in 1943 after refusing to swear an oath of loyalty to Adolf Hitler.

Malick took the title of his film from a George Eliot quote about the myriad anonymous acts of moral courage that go forgotten throughout history. With this sweeping, spiritually minded story, Malick continues to explore the subjects that have captivated him throughout his career, exploring the human search for God and the liminal space between earthbound desires and more transcendent aspirations. Here, that exploration is embodied by an extraordinary figure made all the more heroic by the fact that he was ordinary: Putting one ethical foot in front of the other, he trudges to a tragic but ultimately sublime end.

Portrayed in a thoroughly convincing performance by August Diehl, Franz is introduced while plying his trade as a farmer, with

his beloved wife Fani (Valerie Pachner) by his side. Living in an idyllic corner nestled amid mountains and verdant valleys, the two work, play and love together, eventually welcoming three daughters and members of their extended families. Viewers familiar with Malick's 2011 masterpiece "The Tree of Life" will recognize similar moments of domestic intimacy, as they play out amid family games, quick, darting gestures and meaningful glances.

When Franz is called for military training in 1940, he attends, thinking that the war will be over soon. When he is drafted a few years later, he has decided to forswear allegiance to the Third Reich, a choice he knows will result in hardship for Fani, shunning by their fellow villagers and, most likely, his own death.

At nearly three hours, "A Hidden Life" takes its time establishing the bucolic rhythms of the Jägerstätters' lives, their relationships with their neighbors and Franz's ongoing conversations with Catholic priests who, as Hitler's rise progresses, are either passive or complicit. The wrenching fatalism of Franz's story is underscored by histori-



Twentieth Century Fox

August Diehl and Valerie Pachner star in the film "A Hidden Life."

cal newscasts of Nazi rallies and pageants, making his stance feel even lonelier by comparison.

Filming on location in St. Radegund, where the Jägerstätters lived — and even using their real-life farmhouse for some interior scenes — Malick uses the same visual language he's been honing, with uneven success, since "The New World": a combination of loose, improvisatory scenes, often filmed with a wide fish-eye lens; whispered voices of prayers lifted up to an unhearing God; and lots of shots of nature (in this case waterfalls, wheat fields and magnificent Alpine crags).

heavenly choir — a gratuitous gesture given James Newton Howard's marvelous orchestral score — the effect is less numinous than overwrought.

And yet, even at it teeters on the edge of pretentiousness, "A Hidden Life" exerts a cumulative power that cannot be ignored. Diehl and Pachner are ideally suited to their roles, their expressive faces as simple and as weathered as the tools their characters use in their aged barn. Over the course of the movie, their love story evolves from one of sensuality and shared purpose to a truly sacred bond. As Franz's personal passion play unfolds, the beauty and sadness of his story have burrowed into the viewer's consciousness on a level beyond mere narrative.

"A Hidden Life" is indisputably the finest work Malick has produced in nearly a decade, as an examination of faith, conviction and sacrifice, but also as proof of concept for his own idiosyncratic style. It marks an exhilarating return to form but also, more crucially, content.

"A Hidden Life" is rated PG-13 for mature thematic material including violent images. Running time: 173 minutes.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

A model of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* stands across from the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt. In front of the Senckenberg, which is Germany's premiere natural history museum, is also a model of a *Diplodocus longus*.

Earthly fascination

Senckenberg Museum brings natural history to life

BY MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Dinosaurs have been extinct for millions of years but they still fascinate people, young and old. Even dinosaur bones fascinate — or at least that's the impression you get when you visit the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt, Germany.

The museum belongs to the Senckenberg Natural History Research Foundation, founded in 1817. Named for Frankfurt physician and philanthropist Johann Christian Senckenberg, the institution is one of Germany's best-known and most popular natural history museums.

There is a large model of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* across the street, facing the museum, and a model of a *Diplodocus longus* in front. Maybe the T. rex is staring at the *Diplodocus*, wondering how it would taste.

Inside, the only original skeleton in the world of a *Diplodocus longus* is in the dinosaur hall. The *diplo* was unearthed in Wyoming and was a present from the American museum to the Senckenberg when it opened in 1907.

As interesting as the "terrible lizards" are, the most fascinating exhibit at the museum for me — and it's been that way since I first saw it as a child — is the one of an anaconda trying to swallow a capybara, the largest living rodent in the world, whole. It if had succeeded, it wouldn't have had to eat again for months. It is in a glass case on the left as you enter the large room beyond the dinosaurs that features skeletons of whales and elephants, and their ancestors.

The main attraction in that room is the 72-foot-long skeleton of a fin whale, the second-largest animal in the world. But don't miss the other things like the 10,000-year-old mastodon that once lived in what is now New York.

On the next floor are exhibits of mammals, amphibians, reptiles and birds. There are hundreds of stuffed specimens, from the four corners of the globe, to look at. One room is dedicated to the evolution of plants. But when you come up the stairs, first take a gander at the exhibit in a small room to the left.

Here, the evolution of man is on display, with models and skulls of *Homo sapiens*' forefathers surrounding Lucy, the 3.2-million-year-old *Australopithecus afarensis* who, when her fossilized bones were



Some of the skeletons in the dinosaur hall at the Senckenberg Museum are copies, while some, like the *Diplodocus longus*, second from left, are originals.



In a display that seems to fascinate visitors, an anaconda tries to swallow a capybara, the largest living rodent in the world, whole.

found in Ethiopia in 1974, was the earliest evidence we had that hominids walked upright. What the Senckenberg has is a copy of Lucy; the original is at the National Museum of Ethiopia.

On the top floor, the Senckenberg is constructing a new ocean-themed exhibit, part of a plan to modernize the 200-year-old museum. The project has closed an entire wing of the floor, but you can see "The Fascination of Diversity," a temporary exhibit that shows the diversity of life on Earth in a 50-foot-by-13-foot glass case.

Also on this floor is the insect exhibit. While I was looking at a giant model of a six-legged creature, three girls walked in and one screamed "I hate insects!" before rushing out of the room.

There are some creepy specimens here, but if you are interested in natural history, be it long-extinct dinosaurs or the Earth's diversity, the Senckenberg Museum is a place you will want to visit.

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

The museum is at Senckenberganlage 25 in 60325 Frankfurt. Unfortunately, there is no parking at the museum. Closest parking garages are Adalbertstrasse, which is closed Sundays; Congresscenter Messe Frankfurt at the Maritim Hotel, Theodor-Heuss-Allee 3-5; Messeturm, Friedrich-Ebert-Anlage 49; and WestendGate, Hamburger Allee 2. These are open 24 hours. If you take public transportation, subway lines U4, U6 and U7 halt at the nearby Bockenheimer Warte stop. On bus line 32, get off at the Senckenbergmuseum stop.

TIMES

9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

COSTS

Admission for adults is 10 euros, 5 euros for children 6 to 15 years of age and free admission for kids under 6. A family ticket for two adults and up to three children between 6 and 15 years of age is 25 euros. Parking costs around 1.80 euros per hour, depending on the garage.

FOOD

There is a bistro on the top floor of the museum and plenty of places to eat around the corner on Adalbertstrasse.

INFORMATION

The museum website is museum-frankfurt.senckenberg.de/en. An app is available for download with plenty of information on the museum and its exhibits.

— Michael Abrams



Visitors check out the skeletons of prehistoric animals, including that of an American mastodon.



Models and skulls of *Homo sapiens*' forefathers are on display in the evolution of man exhibit.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Defend yourself against modern travel scams

Europe is a surprisingly creative place when it comes to travel scams. Many of the most successful gambits require a naively trusting tourist, but seasoned travelers can be taken in, too. We should all be wary of the numerous subtle scams — a cabie pads your fare, a hotel business-center computer records your password, or a waiter offers a special with a “special” increased price. But if you’re cautious and not overly trusting, you should have no problem. Here are some of the latest travel scams, and how to skirt them.

Money-wiring requests

You’re searching online for an apartment to rent in Paris, and contact the owner Pierre through Airbnb. Suddenly you get a private email from Pierre saying he can give you a better deal on the side

— avoiding the website commission. The price is right, and the location is fantastic, but Pierre wants you to wire the money directly to his bank account. “I’ve got others interested too, so you’d better do it quick,” he writes. But once you wire the money, Pierre disappears, along with the listing.

Best defense: When booking accommodations, never wire money directly to a foreign bank account. Stick with a reputable, secure reservation website and use a credit card so you can dispute any fraudulent transactions.

ATM scams

In the heart of Barcelona, you are about to use an ATM when another tourist stands on the sidewalk with a selfie stick and starts taking pictures. You don’t think much about it as you withdraw your money and head into the Metro. Five minutes later, after being jostled in a crowded subway car, you find that your wallet is

missing. When you frantically call your bank, you find out that someone with your PIN has already withdrawn hundreds of euros from a different ATM. It turns out the “tourist” with the selfie stick was actually taking a video as you entered your PIN on the ATM keypad. His accomplice then targeted you in the subway.

Best defense: Check your surroundings before withdrawing cash from an ATM. If there is someone suspicious nearby, find a different ATM. And always cover the keypad when you enter your PIN.

Fake tickets

Fresh off a long flight into Schiphol Airport and eager to get to your hotel in central Amsterdam, you approach the train-ticket machine with your credit card in hand. But a friendly-looking passerby offers to sell you at a discount a legit-looking ticket, saying he accidentally purchased two. Later when you feed the ticket into a turnstile, it doesn’t work — the ticket was either a fake, or already had its bar code scanned.

Best defense: Never hand over cash (or a card) to someone who’s not behind a counter.

'Dynamic' currency conversion

On your last day in London, you find a Union Jack coaster set you know your sister will love. You push your credit card into the reader, and it defaults to running the transaction in “USD” unless you select “GBP.” The shopkeeper explains that the U.S. dollar option is a service that



DOMINIC ARIZONA BONUCCELLI/Ricksteves.com

If “tourist police” ask to check your wallet for counterfeit bills, it’s probably a scam.

lets you “lock in” your conversion rate. Later, when you’re in Edinburgh, an ATM offers two options: “You can be charged in dollars: Press YES for dollars, NO for British pounds.” You think “dollars” is the logical choice and press YES. But when you check your bank statements, you see a “fee” for converting transactions to dollars and a poor exchange rate. You’ve been a victim of what banks call “dynamic currency conversion,” which may be legal, but is a rip-off.

Best defense: When a merchant or a bank asks if you want to be charged in dollars, always choose the local currency. Cancel the transaction if they say you must pay in dollars.

Fake officials

In Prague, two uniformed men stop you on the street, flash “Tourist Police”

badges, and ask to check your wallet for counterfeit bills. After looking through your wallet, they say everything is fine and leave. You don’t even notice some bills are missing until later.

Best defense: Never hand over your wallet to anyone. If the “police” insist, tell them you’ll do it only at a police station.

There probably aren’t more thieves in Europe than in the U.S. We travelers just notice them more because they target us. But remember, nearly all crimes suffered by tourists are nonviolent and avoidable. If you exercise adequate discretion, stay aware of your belongings and avoid putting yourself into risky situations, your travels should be no more dangerous than hometown grocery shopping.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

Epiphany celebrations in Italy

For many Europeans, there’s one last hurrah to the holiday season before those decorations get tucked away again for another year.

In Italy, children are getting excited for the appearance of Befana, a good witch who regrets a missed opportunity. According to one version of an ancient legend, the Three Wise Men, on their way to Bethlehem to honor the newborn savior, stopped to ask an old woman for directions. Although she was unable to point out the way, she treated the strangers with kindness, so they invited her to accompany them on their search for the infant. She declined, excusing herself by saying her housework couldn’t wait. Later on, she had a change of heart, and headed out on her own to find baby Jesus. Even today, Befana continues her search for him, flying around on her broom and leaving treats in homes where well-behaved children reside. Her gift-giving spree takes place on the eve of Epiphany, which always falls on Jan. 6. This is the so-called 12th day of Christmas, and the day the Wise Men arrived at the manger bearing their gifts.

“L’Epifanía del Signore” is celebrated not only at home across



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler



the land, it also draws people out into the streets in a number of communities.

Urbania, a town in Le Marche region some 40 miles south of San Marino, holds its annual “La Festa Nazionale della Befana” Jan. 4-6. The old town spiffs up with stockings hanging in the windows and other festive touches, street artists entertain, and children can visit the witch in her home. Entry to the festival costs 5 euros for adults and is free for ages 10 and under. Online: festadellabefana.com

In Venice, the Regata delle Befane is a rowing race along the Grand Canal in which the competitors, exclusively male, are clothed in the long black dresses, shawls and bonnets of a

witch. All participants are from the city’s oldest rowing club. The contenders, accompanied by other boats, race from the starting point in front of the Bank of Italy to the Rialto bridge. Once the race is over, a huge stocking is unfurled. The regatta begins at 11 a.m. and lasts about 15 minutes. Spectators on the shore can stay warm with cups of hot chocolate or mulled wine. Online: tinyurl.com/qnyh955

Rome’s celebration, known as Viva La Befana, takes place near the Vatican. A historical parade made up of hundreds of participants in medieval costume and decorated horses passes by spectators lining the Via della Conciliazione. Among the marchers are the Three Kings, who carry their symbolic gifts to the Pope. The parade begins at 9:30 a.m.

Florence also stages a historical parade. The Procession of the Magi is a solemn cavalcade made up of some 700 marchers and led by the Three Wise Men, riding on horseback in their sumptuous silk costumes. The parade departs Piazza Pitti at 2 p.m. and arrives at Piazza Duomo around 3:30 p.m. Once there, the Magi place their gifts by a living creche, and the city’s metropolitan archbishop reads a passage from the gospel. Online: tinyurl.com/qxyfayxs

In Milan, il Corteo dei Re

Magi sees a colorful procession make its way from the Piazza del Duomo to the Basilica di Sant’Eustorgio, where a living nativity scene awaits. These commemorations take place 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Three Kings parades in Spain

Magic, wonder and thousands of happy children will fill the streets of Madrid on the evening of Jan. 5, as a parade of floats and costumed marchers accompanies the central figures of Melchior, Gaspar and Balthazar, the famed Three Kings from the East. The Cabalgata de Reyes gets underway from the Paseo de la Castellana from 6:30 p.m. and concludes around 9 p.m.

It’s not only Spain’s capital that celebrates the day with a grandiose parade. In Barcelona, the Three Kings and their entourage arrive by sea. In the city of Alcoy, some 60 miles south of Valencia, the Three Wise Men make their triumphant entry into the city on the backs of camels and employ stepladders to leave off gifts for the city’s residents who live on upper floors.

Horned sledge races in Garmisch-Partenkirchen

Garmisch is also a big day in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Ger-

many, where brave teams of four riders hop onto old-fashioned horned sledges and careen along a downhill track. The fastest achieve speeds in excess of 60 mph, and harrowing crashes are not uncommon. Join thousands of cheering spectators on the Partnachalm starting at 11:50 a.m. Jan. 6. The race will be canceled if there’s not enough snow cover, so check the event’s website at noon on Jan. 5, when the final decision is made. Online: hornschlitten.de

Star Singers make their rounds in Germany

Those located elsewhere in Germany might have a sign of the Three Kings Holiday come knocking at their doors. Each year, as part of an initiative known as Sternsinger, or Star Singers, groups of children clad in costumes recalling the look and feel of the Three Kings ring doorbells. If invited inside, they’ll sing a song, leave a chalk mark (or, in more recent times, a sticker) indicating the year on the doorway to the house as a blessing, and take up a collection. Each year, the world’s largest children-to-children charity drive raises millions of euros and supports projects throughout the world, including those in this year’s country of focus, Lebanon. Online: sternsinger.de

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING



PHOTOS BY NORMAN LLAMAS/Stars and Stripes

Doppio Malto's bar serves craft beers and a full menu of alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages. Doppio Malto is a new restaurant and brewery near the Granfiume Gran Shopping mall in Fiume Veneto, Italy.

Award-winning brew

Doppio Malto's craft beer worth the price

By NORMAN LLAMAS
Stars and Stripes

For all you craft beer lovers out there — and for those who like gastropub fare — there's a new Doppio Malto at the Granfiume Gran shopping mall, about half an hour from Aviano.

Don't be put off by the restaurant's location or the fact that it's part of a chain with locations all over Italy. Their craft beers have won multiple awards, including a gold medal for one called Crash at the European Beer Star 2019 competition in Nuremberg, Germany. It was the second competition medal since 2015 for the bittersweet beer described as containing flavors of "chestnut honey, American hop and caramel."

Inside the brightly colored, hard-to-miss building that houses Doppio Malto in the mall, you'll find a dining area that's just as colorful as the outside. There's lots of seating, a huge bar with all of their brews on tap, plenty of TVs to watch sporting events on, two big play areas for kids, and those giant metal beer fermenting tanks.

The servers are friendly, fast and speak English. The menu is extensive and everything we ordered was delicious.

My wife and I had the mixed grill, along with grilled vegetables and fried potato wedges. The serving size was huge — more than enough for the two of us.

Other menu choices included American favorites like chicken wings and onion rings, really good salads, burgers, ribs, barbecue chicken, sausages, even personal pizzas.

My kids loved the fried potato wedges and the fried onion rings — so much so that we ordered



**AFTER HOURS
ITALY**

DOPPIO MALTO

Address: Via Maestri del Lavoro, 42, 33080 Fiume Veneto PN, Italy

Hours: Monday — Thursday 12 p.m. — 12 a.m. Friday and Saturday 12 p.m. — 2 a.m.

Food: Grilled meats, hamburgers, salads; late-night menu; no kids' menu available.

Drinks: Craft beers, wine, and a full bar with an extensive alcoholic beverage selection; fountain sodas, juice, water, and coffee. Bottled craft beers are available to take home.

Prices: About 11 to 17 Euros (\$13 to \$19) for most meals

Menu: Italian and English. Most of the workers speak English and are very helpful.

— Norman Llamas

two servings of the onion rings.

Doppio Malto offers desserts, but we had eaten so much by the time we got that far, we didn't order any.

If you're not hungry, no worries. Many people come here for the craft beers, which don't disappoint.



Fermentation tanks inside Doppio Malto announce their award-winning craft beers, just one reason to stop by this restaurant and brewery.



Doppio Malto's mixed grill for two is one of many delicious items on the menu.

I suggest ordering the beer sampler, which comes with four small glasses of various craft beers. There are several IPAs in both mellow session styles and the hop-monster varieties, as well as a chocolate stout, a German-style white, an English ale and others.

The prices are, for the most part, average, but if you order more than one craft beer and the mixed grill for two, then eating at Doppio Malto will generally cost you more than you'd probably pay to dine at other local restaurants. But the food, the service and those craft beers are worth the extra money.

llamas.norman@stripes.com
Twitter: @normanllamas

Air-fried bagel chips made fast and easy

By ADDIE BROYLES

Austin American-Statesman

If you got an air fryer this holiday season, you're in for a treat.

These \$60 to \$250 machines have been the next best way to get dinner on the table (after the Instant Pot, of course) for two years now, and its fans are more like devotees, spreading the good word of perfect french fries, crusted salmon, quick and easy kale chips, chicken wings that the family can't eat fast enough and the most succulent steak you've ever tasted.

Unlike electric pressure cookers or slow cookers, air fryers specialize in using dry heat to cook foods, much like a convection oven. Hot air swirls around the food, crisping the outside edges or giving it a roasted or broiled effect, without an oven.

This means it can cook everything from broccoli to chicken tenders, bagels to churros. I've even seen cake recipes in some of the cookbooks that have come through my office.

All year, I'd been thinking about getting an air fryer, and I finally got one on a Black Friday sale. It is a high-rated, 5.8-quart model from GoWISE USA that runs for about \$100.

The shiny black appliance is bigger than I thought it would be, and it also heats up faster and more intensely than I thought it would. Rather than test it with fries or chicken wings, I decided to make bagel chips using a recipe from "The Essential Air Fryer Cookbook."

By Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough.

I tossed the bagel chips in a little olive oil, but one of the first big lessons I learned is that



Amazon

The Philips air fryer is one of many examples of the trendy items currently on the market.

you don't have to add oil. The circulating hot air alone will cook and crisp the food. Any additional oil, like the drizzle of olive oil on the bagel slices, can add more flavor.

I also toss them in garlic salt before adding the pieces to the nonstick basket with a handle that nests into another nonstick pan. That's what you slide into the machine.

The digital display has eight presets, including fries, chicken and fish, and you can manually set the temperature anywhere between 170 and 400 degrees. The bagel chips cooked

at 400 degrees and were done in about six minutes, just a few shy of the eight called for in the recipe. I also realized that the device heats up so quickly, you don't really need to warm it up first.

The bagel chips were incredibly crisp and satisfying, and it took even less time than I thought it would.

A reader who has a convection oven reported that she uses air fryer recipes in her convection oven, without having to change the method or ingredients.

AIR FRYER BAGEL CHIPS

These snackable crisps are perfect for a cheese plate, a snack lunch or a road trip. Use as many bagels as you'd like, and season before and after cooking for bagel chips with bite. Stir or toss the chips half-way through cooking to help them cook evenly.

Trader Joe's sells an everything bagel seasoning mixture that is a perfect match for these chips, but so are the spice rubs and mixes already in your pantry. You could use cinnamon and sugar to make a sweet bagel chip, but the cookbook authors don't recommend using blueberry or raisin bagels to make the chips because small pieces of the fruit might fall to the bottom of the fryer and burn.

You'll have to use a whole, unsplit bagel if you want full

bagel rounds. A bagel already split into halves will yield bagel straws.

Ingredients:

1 or 2 bagels, sliced
1 to 2 teaspoons olive oil or melted butter

Heavy pinch of salt, garlic salt or other spice mix

Directions:

In a large bowl, toss together the ingredients. Place them in the basket of an air fryer and cook at 400 degrees for 6 to 8 minutes, tossing halfway through. Keep an eye on the chips during their last few minutes. You want them crisp and brown, but not burn. Season again, to taste, and serve.

Adapted from a recipe in "The Essential Air Fryer Cookbook," by Bruce Weinstein and Mark Scarbrough.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Aisle have more space

Airplane's end seats give occupants more freedom, flexibility

By NATALIE B. COMPTON
Special to The Washington Post

Welcome to the end of our series on the unofficial rules for every seat on a plane, where we break down the responsibilities that come with each to promote common courtesy in the skies. This installation focuses on the aisle seat.

If seats on a plane were children in a family, the aisle seat would be the oldest kid. The aisle seat is the CEO, the team captain. Your placement means you're calling the shots. This is a seat for the pragmatic traveler, the one who's focused on getting in and getting out as efficiently as possible. The aisle seat isn't staring out the window, dreaming; the aisle seat had the foresight to pick early and avoid the middle.

The aisle seat also comes with a sense of freedom. You want to get up 15 times during the flight? Stand whenever you please. You're not disrupting anyone. (Unless you're one of the abominable souls who grabs the headrest in front of you with your full body weight every time you get out of your chair. Then you are absolutely disrupting someone. Please, stop doing this.)

When you're seated, you get the sweet, sweet feeling of relief when you stretch your leg out into the aisle — if only for a moment. Any longer will run the risk of getting your limb bashed by the service cart. But what a thrill.

Watch your knees, and follow the rest of these rules for taking the aisle seat.



ILLUSTRATION BY NOGA AMI-RAV Stars and Stripes
Other illustrations: iStock



Rule No. 1: The aisle seat has good Samaritan duties

With the closest and easiest access to the aisle, you're in the prime position to help your fellow man (should you be willing and able). When you see a parent clearly struggling to wrangle kids and lift a bag into the overhead compartment, or an elderly passenger in the same position, do you part and ask whether you can help. You're packed in a aluminum tube with a bunch of stressed-out travelers — doing something nice goes a long way here. Although no one is going to force you to be kind, consider it an investment in good travel karma for your future adventures.

Rule No. 2: The aisle is gatekeeper

You are the only obstacle separating your row neighbors from the aisle. That means you'll be letting them in and out during the flight. You knew this when you reserved your aisle seat, so be a good sport about aisle-access requests. You may be capable of sitting for an entire flight, but others might not be as lucky. Give them a break and keep your feelings to yourself (i.e., no eye-rolling, heavy sighs or the like).

Rule No. 3: The aisle seat assumes middleman responsibilities

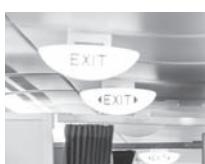
Thanks to your positioning, you're stuck in between passengers and the flight attendants. By default, attendants may enlist your help to do their bidding. They may need a hand passing things over to your neighbors, waking them up from deep slumbers or waving them out of their headphone-created seclusion. Those who would like as few disruptions as possible during their flight should book the window seat instead.

Rule No. 4: The aisle seat dictates departure pace

Time for a multiple-choice quiz. Your plane lands, taxis to the gate, and the "Fasten seat belt" sign dings off. Is it time to (a) stand up immediately and move into the aisle, or (b) stay seated until the row before you leaves, and follow them? You are correct if you answered with either option, because at the end of the day, you get to set the pace of your deplaning.

You can't control how the other passengers exit, but you can choose to rush or relax yourself. Should a neighbor in your row ask nicely for you to move for them, feel free to oblige their request. If they're pressuring you non-verbally by hovering over your chair, do not entertain any guilt: That passenger should have booked an aisle seat if they felt so strongly about when to deplane.

However, just because you have the control here doesn't mean you should abuse it. Unless you have a good reason to wait longer, you should be exiting into the aisle no later than the row in front of you.



Rule No. 5: The aisle seat acts in case of emergency

We've already established that you're the boss of the row. That's particularly true if things should go wrong onboard. In the unlikely case of an emergency, the aisle seat needs to be ready to jump up and get going. This is not the seat for panicking or freezing under pressure. It's your duty to keep it together and stay calm, following flight staff instructions on how to proceed. Lead your row with order and grace.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Ditch that extra baggage

Your suitcase shouldn't become a permanent fixture after a vacation

BY HANNAH SAMPSON

The Washington Post

You might be the kind of hyper-organized traveler who gets home and immediately unpacks, does laundry and puts away your luggage.

Or you might be like me — I would consider completely normal — and still have half-full bags sitting around the living room two months after getting home, just waiting for the next trip.

Who is right in this scenario? OK, probably Group A. But procrastinators are legion, and who can blame us? We're wiped out from traveling. We're bummed the trip is over. We have other clothes, and probably a spare toothbrush. Plus that suitcase looks fine in the corner, right?

"It's kind of like one of those things where, once you get used to seeing it there, you kind of forget that it's there," says Brooke Schoenman, editor and founder of the travel gear and packing site Her Packing List. "It becomes the norm: That suitcase belongs there."

Organization and packing experts are not in favor of this luggage-as-furniture approach. But they also recognize that many of us — so, so many — need help to break out of our old ways.

"We have many clients who will call our consultants in to help them on both the packing side and with unpacking," says Mindy Godding, a certified professional organizer and co-founder of Richmond, Va.-based Abundance Organizing. "So we see this on a daily basis."

We asked experts and regular travelers who have it together to find out the best tips for unpacking once you're back home.

Don't pack too much to begin with

Do you need your entire makeup bag, or can you grab one of each item for the road? Streamline accessories and toiletries, and avoid the pitfall of bringing extra clothes "just in case." Putting similar items in their own packing cubes or bags to begin with can also help with unloading everything at the end.

Dedicate a time for packing

Godding recommends building a "reentry day" into the schedule so travelers aren't getting home the night before they have to rush back to work: "Come back on a Saturday instead of a Sunday so you at least have a down day where no one's expecting you to be at a meeting or on a phone call," she says.

Use that day for all the settling-back-in work, and make a calendar appointment to prioritize the task. If it's not possible to unpack right away, try to get it done within a week at the maximum.

Act fast on laundry

Separate dirty clothes from clean ones in their own bag or compartment and put them in the wash as soon as you get home. Remember that anything wet or soiled will not improve by sitting longer in a suitcase.

Fold clean clothes by type when you're returning from a trip so all the shirts, pants, socks and other items are grouped together. That way, they'll be easier to put away at the same time.

Keep some things packed

Keep a bag of toiletries and essentials stocked and in your bag at all times, along with items you use when traveling, like a luggage scale or jewelry case.

When you get home, clean anything that got dirty, refill whatever is low and make a list of what needs replacing to make sure you're fully prepared for the next trip. If you travel frequently, Godding says, it makes sense to keep spares of staples like allergy medication and low-cost tools such as tweezers, nail clippers and combs in a designated bag.

"Part of the unpacking process is evaluating what you have left for your next trip," Schoenman says.

Take out the tchotchkes

Take souvenirs, papers or other knickknacks you've collected on your trip out of the bag right away. Put them somewhere you will see them.

"I like to put it somewhere where I can't avoid it," Schoenman says. "If I take all that stuff out and put it

on the dining room table, eventually I'm going to have to get to it because I want to sit down."

Toss what you really don't need (that sightseeing pamphlet, bar flier or museum guide) and put gifts and meaningful souvenirs in a dedicated place. Ideally, Godding says, that space would involve some kind of creative visual display or a box with a lid.

"If you can put it in a box or a bin, I think it's a best-case scenario because it gives it boundaries," she says. "If the box is overflowing or you can't connect the lid any longer, all right, I need to reassess what's in there and make sure that it's all still making me happy and all still meaningful."

Freebies such as hotel toiletries or shower caps should also get some scrutiny. Godding says unpacking is the right time to assess any existing inventory at home and make sure the stockpile isn't getting out of control.

"When the stock continues to grow and it never gets depleted, that's usually when you know you've got an issue," she says. "And it's easiest to diagnose that when you're back from a trip."

Insert a reward

If the idea of unpacking is a complete drag, give yourself some motivation.

Godding has several methods that she suggests to clients: Put a TV show on and see how much you can get done during a commercial. Blast some music and put away as many things as possible before each song ends. Invite a supportive friend over so you have company (but also an accountability partner).

Or, taking the spoonful of sugar approach, pack a treat at the bottom of the suitcase or designate some other reward for finishing.

Check for stowaways

Once everything is finally unpacked, inspect your bags inside and out — especially along seams and in various nooks and crannies — for bedbugs or other critters.

"It doesn't matter who you are or where you stay, they can get you," Schoenman says.



WEEKEND: TRAVEL



LUKE SHARRETT/Bloomberg

Cruises show no signs of losing popularity in 2020. Pictured: the Carnival Valor.



Tourist boats are common on Portugal's Douro River.



Seals and penguins abound on the black sand beaches of Macquarie Island, well southeast of Tasmania.

Embark on a new adventure in 2020

Start with one of these life-affirming cruises

BY FRAN GOLDEN
Bloomberg

The Caribbean still reigns supreme when it comes to cruising, but there's a whole new world to explore. Classic ports such as the Bahamas are recovering, new itineraries are opening up in Japan for the 2020 Summer Olympics, and luxury options abound in the Seychelles.

Here are eight places to prioritize in 2020.

1. Japan

Remember when Olympic organizers in Rio de Janeiro slept on cruise ships and called them "floating hotels"? Tokyo will do the same for its turn in the spotlight. From July 24 to Aug. 9, the city is chartering at least one large ship to serve as a floating hotel in response to a shortage of rooms on dry land. But you'd be better off going a more traditional route: Two of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.'s Shanghai-based ships, Spectrum of the Seas and Voyager of the Seas, will offer itineraries that overnight at Tokyo's new terminal. Passengers with tickets can easily get to events and then sail on to other, less frenetic parts of the country.

Windstar Cruises LLC is betting that the summer's television coverage will drum up tourism interest for Japan in general, so it's skipping the marquee games and sending its 312-passenger, all-suite Star Breeze to the country for a series of temple- and garden-centric sailings this fall. But the most peaceful way to sail might be a three-night trip on Guntu, a 38-passenger design ship that's like a floating ryokan in the Seto Inland Sea, complete with traditional open-air onsen baths in some of its suites.

The trip we're most likely to book: Star Breeze 10-night sailing, from \$3,599 per person.

2. The Bahamas

Cruise lines typically rely heavily on the Bahamas. Not only is Nassau, the capital, a frequent port of call, but several companies have organized sailings throughout the commonwealth around islands that they own. In the last year, however, the roles have changed. After Hurricane Dorian devastated Grand Bahama (also a cruise port) and the less-visited Abaco islands, cruise companies helped deliver recovery supplies and made major donations.

Royal Caribbean is opening the second phase of its \$250 million Perfect Day at CocoCay island in January. The Coco Beach Club includes the first overwater floating cabanas in the region. Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. has boosted the offerings at Great Stirrup Cay, a chic, South Beach-style beach oasis where you can shell out as much as \$1,100 a day for a private, air-conditioned villa. MSC Cruises' 95-acre Ocean Cay offers a more tranquil experience that focuses on spa treatments and underwater activities in its protected marine reserve. And when adults-only Virgin Voyages debuts in March, every sailing will stop at a swanky private resort developed by Resorts World Bimini.

The trip we're most likely to book: A four-night itinerary on Virgin's Scarlet Lady, from \$2,750.

3. Kinsale, Ireland

Cruise lines are jumping on the DNA tourism trend, and harbor towns in West Cork, including the historic fishing town of Kinsale, are trying to get a piece of the pie. Promotional efforts have focused on attracting small expedition and boutique ships, and they're paying off. Last year, French line Ponant sent one ship; this year it's sending four. Nearby attractions include a 3.7-mile trail around the ocean cliffs of the Old Head of Kinsale, where the Lusitania was sunk just offshore by a German U-boat in 1915. There's also a star-shaped fort built by Charles II. And if you find through an ancestry search that you're related to the notorious 18th-century pirate Captain Anne Bonny, Kinsale is said to be where she's from.

The trip we're most likely to book: A seven-night sailing from London to Portsmouth, from \$3,830.

4. The Douro River, Portugal

Lisbon is a popular port, but attention has also shifted north to the quieter Portuguese city of Porto, famous for its sweet red fortified wine. It's also becoming a popular starting point for cruises on the Douro River. Hillsides covered in terraced vineyards and historic quintas reflect 2,000 years of winemaking in the valley, with itineraries that include stops for tastings and time to cross the border toward the medieval city of Salamanca in northwestern Spain. Luxury tour operator Tauck Inc. and luxury brand Uniworld River Cruises are each debuting ships in the spring: Uniworld's 100-passenger S.S. Sao Gabriel has butler-serviced suites; Douro-influenced decor and locally sourced cuisine; Tauck's 84-passenger MS Andorinha features an infinity-style pool, outdoor dining and Balinese daybeds. Dinner at a family-owned wine estate near the village of Pinhao is included. The trip we're most likely to book: One-week Tauck Villages and Vintages itinerary, from \$4,190.

5. Raja Ampat Islands

Far from the fancy resorts in Bali — in miles, scenery and style — this Indonesian archipelago occupies an enviable position in the center of the Coral Triangle. Cruises here lead to fascinating cultural encounters, but the big attraction is the warm sea, home to about 75% of known coral species and about half of all the world's marine tropical fish. Typically the best way to see it all has been on small dive boats, but upscale expedition cruise ships from Ponant and Australian Line Coral Expeditions have recently moved in. Joining them is Aqua Expeditions, best known for its top-notch Amazon River sailings. It transformed a naval vessel into its first ocean ship, the 15-suite yacht Aqua Blu, on which it offers a culinary program and sailings that stretch through the winter.

The trip we're most likely to book: One week on Aqua Blu, from \$7,525.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

FROM PAGE 30

6. Subantarctic Islands

These islands in the Southern Ocean, which are on the way to Antarctica from Australia and New Zealand, are protected nature preserves, where only researchers live among birds and marine mammals. On Macquarie Island, beaches may be covered with royal penguins and fur seals. The island also has a weird geologic feature: Some of its shores are piled up with crushed green rocks from the Earth's mantle that look eerily like they're covered in snakeskin. And the Shores, one of several chains of New Zealand islands, feature crested penguins endemic to the islands. Cruise passengers visit on zodiacs that hug the shoreline or make a landing for guided walks, all in places where the number of visitors is tightly controlled. Get here on expedition ships from SilverSea Cruise Holding Ltd. or Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic, which have new itineraries traversing the region.

The trip we're most likely to book: A two-week cruise round trip from Dunedin (on New Zealand's South Island) on Silver Explorer, from \$13,950.

7. The Seychelles

Luxurious options abound in this Indian Ocean paradise off of East Africa. Crystal Cruises' 62-passenger superyacht, Crystal Esprit, has suites with butler service and a private submarine. Ponant's 184-passenger Le Bougainville has a snazzy, underwater Blue Eye Lounge, somewhat like a submarine with a panoramic view and where you can get a martini. But the real beauty of sailing here is taking tiny zodiacs to islands with uninhabited beaches, where you may snorkel among coral reefs or wander past tortoises in lush forests. Keep an eye out for the Seychelles warbler and other native birds.

The trip we're most likely to book: A seven-night trip on Crystal Esprit, from \$5,599.

8. Nile River

In January, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises launches the new 84-passenger, all-suite S.S. Sphinx, and because it will only sail in Egypt, its look will have an authentic sense of place. (Think Egyptian fabrics and artworks.) Similarly, Viking River Cruises in September adds the 82-passenger Viking Osiris, done up in Scandinavian design despite her Nubian name. Standard 12-day sailings on both ships start and end in Aswan, usually after a hotel stay in Cairo and a flight to Luxor. For DIY types, there are also four-night sailings to Aswan on Sanctuary Retreats' elegant, recently upgraded, 64-passenger Sanctuary Nile Adventurer. Its shorter sailings aren't packed with pre- and post-cruise land experiences and are a little more flexible. A must-do is drinks on the terrace of Aswan's Old Cataract Hotel, where Agatha Christie wrote parts of her 1937 novel "Death on the Nile." Kenneth Branagh's film based on the book will debut in theaters in the fall.

The trip we're most likely to book: Four nights on the Sanctuary Nile Adventurer, from \$1,410.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL



ANDREA SACHS/The Washington Post

Before the protests in Hong Kong, visitors jockeyed for space on the Sky Terrace 428, a viewing platform on Victoria Peak. Six months later, the crowds have disappeared.

Maintaining constant vigilance

How to travel safely amid civil unrest in Hong Kong

BY ANDREA SACHS
The Washington Post

Hong Kong, I changed for you. Instead of bolting out of the hotel upon my arrival, leaving the day open to chance, I sat in my guest room figuring out how to avoid surprises. I checked the websites and apps of the U.S. Consulate in Hong Kong, the Mass Transit Railway, GovHK and Telegram, an encrypted messaging service. I read the most recent report from International SOS, a risk assessment firm. On my way out, I consulted with the reception desk about any security issues. And on the street, surrounded by "Free Hong Kong" graffiti and vandalized guardrails, I kept my antenna up, listening for any rumblings of discontent. I am typically an observant traveler, but in Hong Kong, I became vigilant.

For anyone visiting a city or country seized by protests, this is what you do. You stay informed. You remain alert. You cast a sideways glance at happenstance. You can still explore with abandon, just not on the protest route.

"Planning your trip around protests can be more stressful than necessary, but if you can move around and avoid them, it's not as dangerous," said Matthew Bradley, regional security director for the Americas at International SOS. "You just need to be super flexible and willing to go with the flow."

In terms of civil unrest, the world map has become a game of whack-a-mole, with many of the moles popping up in concert. This year, citizens have demonstrated in the United Kingdom, Ecuador, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, Haiti, Russia, Zimbabwe, the Czech Republic, India, Egypt, Tunisia and Indonesia, among three dozen or so countries.

"This is definitely the age of mass protests," said Samuel Brannen, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "There is not a region

or place in the world that isn't experiencing them."

Brannen said the trend started about a decade ago, with the Arab Spring, and "has ticked up in intensity globally." Protesters' activities are rarely isolated and self-contained; they spill into everyday life, affecting residents and travelers alike. Strikes shut down transit systems, and marches consume neighborhoods and popular thoroughfares. Officials barricade streets, including those in front of hotels and tourist attractions, and businesses after their hours, forcing visitors to rejigger their itineraries. During standoffs between protesters and law enforcement, visitors have to lie low until the tension subsides. But once calm returns, they can pick up the sightseeing where they left off.

To be sure, these disruptions are not pleasant, especially when you crave a soothing vacation. But (safely) witnessing a defining moment in a country's history can provide unparalleled insights into a culture and a deeper understanding of its people and their passions.

"Culturally, it's not insensitive to visit," said Bradley. "You can experience their pursuit of democracy."

Do your research

As protests proliferate around the world, more travelers will have to face this tough question: Should you visit a destination experiencing unrest?

For the answer, you need to dig a little. Start with the travel advisories issued by government agencies, such as the U.S. State Department. For multiple perspectives, David Clapworthy, an Asia sales manager with Audley Travel, reads the warnings compiled by several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. He steers his customers away from high-risk places, such as Bolivia, a Level 4 in the U.S. grading system. "Do not travel to Bolivia due to civil unrest," the agency states without ambiguity. The countries that fall

in the middle — neither safe nor dangerous — are more challenging. Chile, Zimbabwe, France and Ecuador are all Level 2 countries. For these destinations, the agency urges travelers to "exercise increased caution." Not the most helpful advice if you don't know why you are raising your cautionary bar.

So fill in the blanks. Familiarize yourself with the issues that ignited the protests as well as the participants' demands and the government's response. Common grievances include inequality (Chile), higher taxes (France, Ecuador), suppression of freedoms (Hong Kong), corruption (Malta, Russia), election fraud (Bolivia) and unjust treatment of minority groups (India). Understanding the nature of the protests is equally important: Are they localized or widespread, sporadic or consistent? In most cases, the protesters will direct their ire at the government and law enforcement, not tourists. But sometimes visitors get scooped up in the net.

Bradley urges travelers to hold off on travel if the uprisings restrict movement and cause a shortage of resources, such as food and fuel. Also take heed if either side of the struggle resorts to violence.

Thomas Carothers, an international democracy expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said countries with politically closed systems and a low tolerance for opposing views, such as Russia and Egypt, might more quickly employ harsh tactics to silence protesters. He said innocent bystanders are more at risk when a brutal response is premeditated rather than a spontaneous response to a volatile situation. In addition, protests with a clear strategy and an organized base usually adhere to a peaceful course of action. Movements without a central core can devolve into chaos, with groups splintering off and adopting extreme behaviors.

And finally, find a local source — a relative, an old college roommate, a Facebook friend — who lives in the destination or

recently visited it and can provide a first-person narrative. I also emailed my hotel and asked about the situation. A half-hour later, I received a reassuring reply from the assistant reservation supervisor at the Luxe Manor in Kowloon: "We believe Hong Kong is safe to travel at this stage. Our team will be very happy to assist you and to provide you with the most updated information during your guest stay."

He was right. At check-in, the front desk attendant gave me intel about an upcoming protest on Hong Kong Island.

Fewer tourists, fewer lines

"It's the worst time to visit," said Michael Tsang, founder of Hong Kong Free Tours, "and the best time to visit."

The best and the worst occupy two sides of the same coin. The protests have caused a sharp drop in tourism: The Hong Kong Tourism Board reported a 43% decrease in arrivals in October compared with the same time last year. Airlines have reduced passenger capacity through early next year; in September, United indefinitely suspended service from Chicago. Hotels are scrambling for guests, with even the most luxurious properties offering discounts and perks. At Lan Kwai Fong Hotel at Kau U Fong, a boutique hotel with a Michelin-starred Cantonese restaurant, I paid less than \$100 a night and received a free bottle of red wine, a fruit plate and a 2 p.m. checkout. The rate at the Luxe Manor was not much more. I felt like my hotel stays were more of a charitable donation than a business transaction.

I was last in Hong Kong three years ago, and my memory is of crowds, lines and escalating frustration. At Victoria Peak, the ride to the mountaintop took hours because of long lines to buy a ticket, board the tram and reach the Sky Terrace 428. At the top, throngs of people body-blocked the harbor view. Selfie

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

WEEKEND: TRAVEL & FOOD

FROM PAGE 34

sticks chopped up the sunset-glazed sky. I gazed at the skyline through the screen of a stranger's smartphone. On this visit, I walked right up to the ticket window and straight onto the tram. No obstacles impeded my vista.

Hong Kong law requires organizers to obtain a permit to protest, so I knew exactly where and when the events would occur during my visit. Security experts recommend that tourists steer clear of protest sites and take flight if they notice a large group of people amassing. But curiosity is a powerful drug.

On my first night, I headed down to the water's edge to watch the Symphony of Lights, a laser and sound show featuring more than 40 illuminated buildings on both sides of Victoria Harbor. I plotted a route that would skirt the Observation Wheel and cut through an anti-tear-gas rally. Hundreds of attendees sat on the ground and listened to speakers address the police's use of tear gas and explain the effects of the toxins. The crowd was quiet and respectful. After the light spectacle, I circled back to the rally. A girl in a school uniform knelt on the sidewalk and spray-painted "Ideas are bulletproof" in English and Cantonese, a quote from the movie "V for Vendetta." On another patch of sidewalk, she scrawled "12.8." I knew that we date well.

Observing the unrest

Hong Kong Free Tours started offering its Protest Tour in October, soon after the government banned protesters from wearing masks. The last tour, in November, did not go well. The two participants, plus Michael, who was guiding, were exposed to tear gas. Michael suspended the excursion before tiptoeing back onto the streets a few weeks ago. The Dec. 8 march organized by Civil Human Rights Front marked his official return.

Seven of us from around the world — Sweden, China, the Netherlands, Israel, Singapore and Wisconsin — met at the starting point in Victoria Park on Causeway Bay. With our predominantly Western faces and light-colored clothes, we stood out among the black-outfitted Hongkongers pouring out of the metro station. Many of them gripped umbrellas, but not for protection from inclement weather. Michael introduced himself and half-jokingly told us he didn't want to know our names or personal details. He explained that we

were not protesting; we were on a tour in a protest, which is why we could wear masks. (The law has a few exceptions and loopholes.) Even so, I declined one of the medical masks a woman was handing out.

Michael played back the events that sparked the June protests: In February 2018, a Hong Kong teenager killed his girlfriend during a vacation in Taiwan. A year later, the Hong Kong government proposed a law that would allow Taiwan and China the right to extradite its citizens. Hongkongers, suspicious of China's judicial system, revolted. Legislators withdrew the initiative, but the protesters didn't disband. They added four more demands and forged onward.

"Five demands, not one less," Michael said, echoing a slogan.

Before setting off, he reminded us of protest etiquette: no photos of law enforcement or protesters' faces. ("Where's Waldo?"-like crowd shots were acceptable.) Also, if someone raises their umbrella, don't poke your head under it and investigate; the person might be attending to a private matter, such as scribbling a message on a wall.

We walked at a steady pace, with no cars or package-laden pedestrians blocking the route that officials had closed to traffic. Individuals with bullhorns or commanding voices led call-and-response chants. We hit a logjam by the Sogo department store. The crowd parted for a woman pushing a baby stroller. Umbrellas shot open like inverted primroses as several people noticed shifty activity on a balcony above. Someone in the front broke out in song. All of the voices joined in "Glory to Hong Kong," the unofficial anthem of the movement.

The protest ended at Chater Garden in the Central district, but Michael dismissed our group before the finishing line. The event, which drew more than 800,000 supporters, had been peaceful, but violence could still erupt.

"Use this experience today to tell people what Hong Kong is really like," he said in his parting words. "Hopefully, one day this will end."

After the tour, we grabbed a drink at Landmark, a nearby luxury mall. Young Hongkongers drank overpriced coffee, their eyes locked on their gadgets. They resembled typical youth frittering away a Sunday, if not for the umbrellas they were carrying on a cloudless night.



ANDREA SACHS/Washington Post

Graffiti on a bridge near the Observation Wheel on Hong Kong Island reminds pedestrians of the protesters' five demands.



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

Eggcellent's most popular dish is Half and Half Benedict. One half is a traditional eggs Benedict on an English muffin, while the other is served with quinoa.

Eggcellent choice

Enjoy an American-style breakfast all day

BY CHRISTIAN LOPEZ

Stars and Stripes

Down on the first basement floor of Mori Tower in Roppongi, the familiar scent of a staple ingredient offers a hint of a unique breakfast experience.

Eggcellent is an American-style breakfast restaurant that incorporates organic eggs from Egg Kurofushi farm in the Yamanashi prefecture just southwest of Tokyo, according to the eatery's website.

The inviting yellow-and-white interior accompanied by the neon sunny-side-up sign above the entrance exudes a warm aura perfect for a filling breakfast of pancakes or eggs.

The restaurant's wooden furnishings have the capacity to seat a solo brunch or families that require an additional table. Menus are available in English, which is also spoken by the wait staff.

The menu offers an array of breakfast dishes, mainly eggs done a variety of ways, such as eggs Benedict, either original or with quinoa, eggs sunny-side up or avocado toast laid over a bed of scrambled eggs. All dishes are served with a leaf salad.

While pricey at 1,650 yen, about \$15, the most popular dish is the Half and Half Benedict. One half is a regular eggs Benedict, an English muffin topped with bacon, a poached organic egg and hollandaise sauce. It's paired with a quinoa Benedict: an egg on top a bed of quinoa and topped with ranchen chips, avocado, raw tuna and an original mugi-miso sauce.

An Eggcellent Plate for the indecisive has a little bit of everything: eggs Benedict, a leaf salad, pancakes, yogurt, quinoa and the fresh deli meat of the day.

Coffee, tea, warm or iced milk from Senbonmatsu — a dairy farm north of Tokyo in Tochigi — ginger ale, Pepsi Cola and sparkling wine are all options to add to your meal set if you choose the plate for an additional 350 yen (about \$3.20).

Smoothies, juices, different kinds of coffee and even beer are options independent of the set drinks.

While the egg-themed restaurant serves mostly eggs, you also have a choice of pancakes, coconut pancakes or granola yogurt pancakes. A stack of flapjacks begins at 1,000 yen, or \$9.15.

The front of the restaurant also has a bakery that prepares egg tarts starting at 200 yen for one or a box of six for 1,200 yen, or \$11. You can call



**AFTER HOURS
TOKYO**



CHRISTIAN LOPEZ/Stars and Stripes

Eggcellent is an American-style breakfast restaurant that uses organic eggs from a farm in Yamanashi prefecture just southwest of Tokyo.

EGGCCELLENT

Location: Mori Tower Hillside B1F, 6-10-1 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Hours: Open 7 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Friday and 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Saturday-Sunday.

Prices: Prices start at 1,000 yen for a plate of pancakes, then 1,100 yen for eggs made your way, 1,350 for eggs Benedict, 1,400 for the Eggcellent Set Plate and then 1,650 yen for the popular half and half Benedict.

Dress: Casual

Directions: About a five-minute walk from Roppongi Station.

Information: Online: eggcellent.co.jp

— Christian Lopez

and order in advance for pickup.

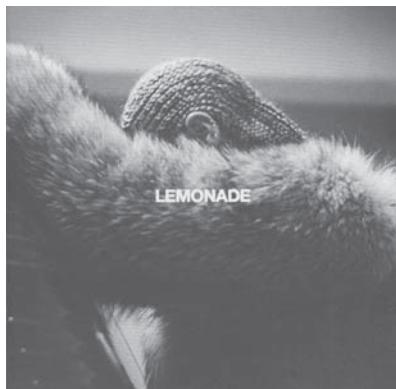
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WEEKEND: POP CULTURE OF THE DECADE – MUSIC

TOP ALBUMS OF THE 2010s

BY MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press

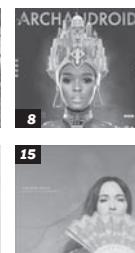
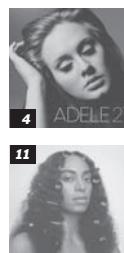
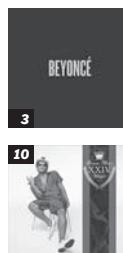
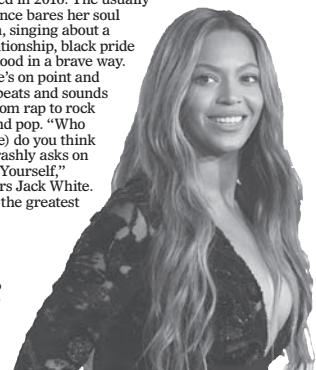


1. Beyoncé, 'Lemonade'

At the beginning of this decade, Beyoncé was already the greatest singer of her generation. She won a record six Grammys in a single night, had women AND MEN "oh-oh-ing" to the fun sound of "Single Ladies" and continued to be a beast of a performer. But somehow Superwoman — shoot, she's Superman, too! — found a way to do more: Like a boss, she launched her own company, Parkwood Entertainment, and really took the bull by the horns of her career. In 2011, she released the R&B adventure "4," featuring classics like "Countdown," "Love on Top," "Party," "End of Time," "I Care" and "I Miss You." Three years later — in surprise form — came "Beyoncé," her bold, audacious and daring album that showcased a new side of Beyoncé: Goodbye was the girl who cared about topping the charts, and born was an artist, a true storyteller, a grown woman. Somehow, she topped herself again with "Lemonade," which still tastes as good as it did when it was released in 2016. The usually private Beyoncé bares her soul on the album, singing about a troubled relationship, black pride and motherhood in a raw way. Lyrically, she's on point and honest over beats and sounds that range from rap to rock to country and pop. "Who (the (expletive) do you think I am," she brashly asks on "Don't Hurt Yourself," which co-stars Jack White. The answer: the greatest of all time.

It was a great decade for Beyoncé, who also holds the No. 3 spot on this list.

AP



2. Rihanna, 'Anti'

Something was in the water in 2016: Beyoncé delivered "Lemonade" and Rihanna gave us the best album of her career with "Anti." Rihanna had been moving like the Energizer Bunny since releasing her first album in 2005. She also put out albums in 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 — showing that she was a singer who knew how to pick a hit, record it and make it sound better than any other artist could. But she took four years to create "Anti," and the time was used wisely. No need to hit the skip button on this album as Rihanna shows her sultry side on "Kiss It Better" her twerk side on "Work" and her vocal chops on "Love on the Brain." Her hard work, work, work, work, work, work has truly paid off.

3. Beyoncé, 'Beyoncé'

See earlier entry.

4. Adele, '21'

Back in my day — well in 2010 — record labels sent albums months in advance, and in November 2010 I received Adele's "21." Everything else around had to be turned off. I was sucked in. Months later, so was the world. THE ENTIRE WORLD. Adele was impressive on her 2008 debut, especially on "Hometown Glory," but with "21" she went deep, too deep, she was rolling in the deep! Literally. Each song made you feel something — sad, lonely, bouncy, fired up, calm, angry, lost. And nine years later, each song sounds as classic as they did at first listen, especially "Turning Tables," "Send Fire to the Rain" and the incomparable "Someone Like You."

5. Kendrick Lamar, 'good kid, m.A.A.d city'

All of Kendrick Lamar's albums released this decade have been masterpieces, including the 2011 independent release "Section.80" as well as the major-label projects "To Pimp a Butterfly" and "DAMN.," which won him the Pulitzer Prize for music as he made history as the first non-classical or jazz artist to win the prestigious prize. Lamar has profoundly mixed his poetry with hip-hop, jazz, soul, funk and African music to create songs that tackle blackness, street life, police brutality, survival and self-worth. And with 2012's "good kid, m.A.A.d city," this great kid immediately raised the bar not only in hip-hop, but in music period, forcing his peers to do better and try harder.

6. HAIM, 'Days Are Gone'

The sister trio HAIM reached perfection on their debut album. Hit play. And that is all.

7. SZA, 'Ctrl'

SZA is masterful and introspective on her confessional debut album, which follows a young woman going through life and the turbulent experiences that come with it, from dating dusty boys to dealing with self-doubt.

8. Janelle Monae, 'The ArchAndroid'

According to contemporary pop folklore, Janelle Monae arrived on the pop landscape from another planet, and boy do we need more artists from that sphere to land here now. On the beautifully theatrical "The ArchAndroid," she brilliantly paints the picture of an android, Cindi Mayweather, who finds out she is the chosen one and is trying to figure out how to handle her newfound mission. The versatile album has so many high points, including the Fela-flavored "Dance or Die," the playful "Tightrope," the groovy "Locked Inside" and the addictive "Faster."

9. Katy Perry, 'Teenage Dream'

I'll quote the opening line of my 2010 "Teenage Dream" review, which came before the album matched the record Michael Jackson's "Thriller" set by launching five No. 1 hits: "Katy Perry's new CD is like a magical slot machine: Select any song and you'll hear a hit."

10. Bruno Mars, '24K Magic'

Bruno Mars released three epic albums this decade, but "24K Magic" was a whole mood.

11. Solange, 'A Seat at the Table'

Solange's art-piece of an album will move you to think, and sing along, at the same time.

12. Sam Smith, 'In the Lonely Hour'

Unrequited love ruled Sam Smith's debut album, introducing the world to a piercing voice that is brave and honest.

13. Nas, 'Life Is Good'

Nas is still the best rapper alive. Don't at me.

14. Taylor Swift, '1989'

After dabbling in it on "Reed," former country singer Taylor Swift hopped, skipped and jumped into the pop music world with "1989," an adventurous album full of hits, hits and more hits.

15. Kacey Musgraves, 'Golden Hour'

With timeless songs like "Space Cow-boy," "Butterflies," "Slow Burn" and "Lonely Weekend," Kacey Musgraves proved to not just be golden, but grand.

WEEKEND: POP CULTURE OF THE DECADE – MUSIC

TOP SONGS OF THE 2010s

By MESFIN FEKADU
Associated Press**Robyn**
'Dancing on My Own'

We've all been there — the one you want is dancing with someone else. For that exact moment, Robyn created "Dancing on My Own," so instead of awkwardly checking your phone, just dance to this tune.

**Kelly Rowland featuring Lil Wayne**
'Motivation'

Don't ever sleep on Kelly. Ro.

Alabama Shakes
'Gimme All Your Love'

Brittany Howard's bluesy vocals plus psychedelic guitar-playing equals OMG.

**Drake**
'Passionfruit'

Drake can do so many things — rap, sing, sing-rap, rap in accents, and more. But my favorite performance of his this decade? His groovy nature on the dance-floor anthem "Passionfruit." Here's to hoping he finally releases a full-length R&B album of his singing.

Disclosure featuring Sam Smith
'Latch'

Speaking of dance-floor anthems, "Latch" was, and still is, the jam!

1**Jay-Z and Kanye West**
(Expletive) In Paris

The Kanye we miss, and Jay-Z we've always loved.

**6****Beyoncé**
'Run the World (Girls)'

No explanation needed.

Lady Gaga
'Alejandro'

Gaga's "The Fame Monster" EP, released a year after she put out her multi-hit debut "The Fame," was a piece of art, as Gaga elevated her radio-ready sound to newer, darker dimensions, especially on "Alejandro."

**7****Adele**
'Someone Like You'

This song induces tears of sadness (break-ups are hard!) and tears of joy (this song is just too good).

**10****Diplo, Skrillex and Justin Bieber**
'Where Are U Now'

The song that helped Bieber gain adult male fans, even if they all didn't want to admit it at first.

**14****Miley Cyrus**
'Wrecking Ball'

Remember when Miley was putting out good music?

**15****Nio Garcia, Darell and Casper Magico featuring Bad Bunny, Nicky Jam and Ozuna**
'Te Bote Remix'

Close to seven minutes long, "Te Bote" is an addictive track featuring some of the best performers on the contemporary Latin music scene.

**16****H.E.R. and Daniel Caesar**
'Best Part'

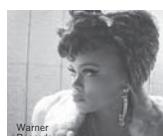
Much like Ed Sheeran's "Thinking Out Loud," "Best Part" is going to be played at weddings for years to come.

**17****SZA**
'The Weekend'

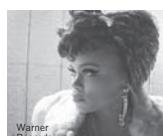
This is the definition of a situationship.

**21****Sufjan Stevens**
'Mystery of Love'

Stevens' vocals are dreamy and his lyrics are soft and direct.

**22****Andra Day**
'Rise Up'

Press play and be great.

**18****Frank Ocean**
'Thinkin About You'

Ocean's straightforward lyrics and vocal performance — especially that falsetto — make this song unforgettable.

**23****DaVido**
'Fall'

An Afrobeat adventure.

**24****Jessie Ware**
'Champagne Kisses'

This song is luscious and rich.

**25****Willow Smith**
'Whip My Hair'

Whip it real good.



WEEKEND: BOOKS

If you read it and loved it in 2019, read more like it in 2020

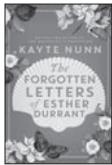
BY ANGELA HAUPT
Special to The Washington Post

Here are 12 books, from a variety of genres, to consider based on recent favorites.



If you enjoyed "City of Girls," by Elizabeth Gilbert, read "The Forgotten Letters of Esther Durrant," by Kayte Nunn (March 3)

In 1951, young mother Esther Durrant thought she was going on vacation; instead, her husband committed her to a mental asylum on a remote island. Nearly 20 decades later, a feisty marine scientist takes shelter there and discovers a suitcase of long-lost love letters. The book's narration alternates between the '50s and the present, unfolding a family mystery and, ultimately, a love story.



If you enjoyed "All This Could Be Yours," by Jami Attenberg, read "All Adults Here," by Emma Straub (May 5)

There are three generations of Stricks at the center of Straub's new novel: Astrid, a 60-something widow and newly out bisexual; her three adult children; and her teenage granddaughter, Cecilia. After witnessing a bus accident, Astrid is grappling with the notion that perhaps she wasn't quite the parent she imagined herself to be — and everyone else is struggling to figure out, well, everything else. Prepare for a smart, of-the-moment take on a family in turmoil.

If you enjoyed "Know My Name," by Chanel Miller, read "Whistleblower," by Susan Fowler (Feb. 18)

In 2017, then-25-year-old Susan Fowler wrote a blog post about the "very, very strange year" she spent as an engineer at Uber — rocking Silicon Valley with accusations of sexual harassment and retaliation. It went viral and started a reckoning: Uber's chief executive and 20 additional employees were forced out, and other tech companies began looking inward. In her memoir, Fowler, who's remained mostly quiet since then, opens up about the decision to share her story

and the ramifications of going public.

If you enjoyed "Evvie Drake Starts Over," by Linda Holmes, read "In Five Years," by Rebecca Serle (March 3)

Dannie Cohan, a Type A lawyer, gets engaged right on time — of course she does; it's part of her five-year plan. But she wakes up afterward in a different apartment with a very different man, which is not part of the plan, even if he is attractive. It's still Dec. 15, but in 2025 — five years in the future. An hour later, Dannie is back in 2020, trying to stifle the disconcerting dream. Or was it a premonition? She's mostly successful, until the man shows up a few years later on her best friend's arm.



If you enjoyed "The Silent Patient," by Alex Michaelides, read "Darling Rose Gold," by Stephanie Wrobel (March 17)

Rose Gold Watts spent 18 years believing she was seriously ill — a concoction fabricated by her mother, Patty, who's sentenced to five years in jail after being exposed. In this claustrophobic psychological suspense novel, the two move back together — but each has an ulterior motive and revenge to exact.



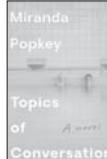
If you enjoyed "No Happy Endings," by Nora McInerny, read "Keep Moving," by Maggie Smith (May 5)

A few years ago, Smith's poem "Good Bones" spread quickly and widely on social media with the help of Alyssa Milano and Megan Mullally, among other celebrities. After getting divorced, Smith started writing daily tweets about pushing through to the other side of loss — small bursts of wisdom, truth and inspiration. Her new book of quotes and essays expands on the idea that new beginnings are opportunities.



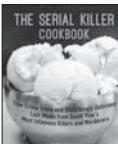
If you enjoyed "Normal People," by Sally Rooney, read "Topics of Conversation," by Miranda Popkey (Jan. 7)

Popkey's lyrical debut novel reads like a series of short stories: Over the span of 20 years, an unnamed narrator has conversations with an eclectic set of women — conversations about shame and love, sexuality and power. Envy and guilt. Motherhood. Loneliness. The slim book is smart and raw, and Popkey dives head-on into difficult, well — how else to say it? — topics of conversation.



If you enjoyed "Stay Sexy & Don't Get Murdered," by Georgia Hardstark and Karen Kilgariff, read "The Serial Killer Cookbook," by Ashley Lecker (April 21)

Ruth Snyder had chicken Parmesan and Alfredo pasta. Macaroni and cheese for Gustavo Julian Garcia. Ted Bundy requested, but did not eat, seared steak, hash browns, toast and fried eggs. This cookbook pairs serial-killer trivia that will thrill true-crime aficionados with recipes for famous killers' final meals, from breakfast to indulgent desserts.

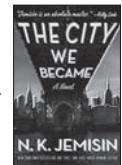


If you enjoyed "Last Witnesses: An Oral History of the Children of World War II," by Svetlana Alexievich, read "The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz," by Erik Larson (Feb. 25)

On the day Winston Churchill became prime minister of the United Kingdom — May 10, 1940 — Hitler invaded Holland and Belgium. In this historical narrative, Larson, who's known for epics such as "The Devil in the White City," pieces together Churchill's day-to-day over the course of a year, with the help of diaries, original archival documents and recently released intelligence reports.

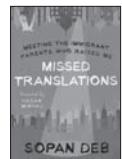
If you enjoyed "Black Leopard, Red Wolf," by Marlon James, read "The City We Became," by N.K. Jemisin (March 24)

Jemisin, the Hugo Award-winning fantasy author, blends speculative and literary fiction in this, the first of a new series. Five New Yorkers must come together to save their city, which has literally come to life, in a story that'll give you "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" vibes. Expect an interdimensional novel that plays with identity, culture and magic.



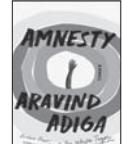
If you enjoyed "Inheritance," by Dani Shapiro, read "Missed Translations," by Sopan Deb (April 21)

Just before his 30th birthday, Deb, a stand-up comedian and culture reporter for the New York Times, realized he barely knew his immigrant parents, whose arranged marriage had collapsed years prior. His father had returned to India, while his mother lived in New Jersey — and Deb's retelling of his journey to connect with both of them is full of self-discovery and forgiveness, with a side of comedy.



If you enjoyed "Lost Children Archive," by Valerie Luiselli, read "Amnesty," by Aravind Adiga (Feb. 18)

Danny, an illegal immigrant in Australia who works as a house cleaner, has finally achieved some semblance of a normal life. But when one of his clients is murdered, he has to choose whether to come forward with his suspicions that she was killed by the doctor she was having an affair with — and risk being deported — or say nothing and hinder justice. It's the fifth novel from the Booker Prize-winning Adiga.



WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“The Lighthouse”: Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson star as two men attempting to stay sane on an 1890s New England island, stuck after a storm, residing in a, well, you know. Disturbing imagery abounds as Winslow (Pattinson) begins experiencing disturbing visions, and the film could deeply affect your relationship with those beacons of the sea (this movie's got everything: a decapitated head, graphic violence against fake seagulls, mermaid sex, oh my!).

It's weird, and it's dark, and we should expect nothing less from director Robert Eggers, whose debut was the 2015 feature “The Witch.” And it works.

“Joker”: In one of the most polarizing movies of 2019, Joaquin Phoenix stars as Arthur Fleck, a failed stand-up comedian who, struggling with mental illness and an unjust system, devolves into becoming the infamous DC Comics supervillain and arch-villain of Batman. The film aims to create empathy for the character, blaming his environment for inspiring his eventual life of crime. Todd Phillips left comedy to direct the film (he told *Vanity Fair* it's hard to be funny with “this woke culture”).

But considering the controversy that came with it, it doesn't live up to the hype.

“Aside from a few soap opera-style reveals, you've heard it all before,” wrote Tribune News Service's Katie Walsh.

Also available on DVD:

“A Million Little Pieces”: A writer with a drug addiction (Aaron Taylor-Johnson) checks in to a Minnesota rehab.

“Big Little Lies: The Complete Second Season”: Three mothers in an affluent Monterey, Calif. (Reese Witherspoon, Nicole Kidman, Shailene Woodley), have a dark secret in this HBO mystery series.

“Bulletproof 2”: A special agent (Faizon Love) disguises himself as a member of a criminal family and unintentionally puts the person he's impersonating (KirK Fox) in danger.

“Crown Vic”: An LAPD officer (Thomas Jane) attempts to catch two criminals who have murdered cops.

“Girl on the Third Floor”: A flawed husband (C.M. Punk) attempts to fix up a dilapidated house with a dark past.

“Imprisoned”: A prison warden (Laurence Fishburne) frames an ex-convict out on parole (Juan Pablo Raba) for murder.

“Mine 9”: A group of Appalachian miners fight to survive after being trapped underground because of a methane explosion that limits their oxygen.

“Paradise Hills”: Young women (Emma Roberts, Awkwafina, Eliza Gonzalez, Danielle Macdonald) must escape from an peaceful island after learning the disturbing truth behind it.

“The Shed”: Bullied teens (Jay Jay Warren, Cody Kostro) hatch a sinister plan after discovering a vampire in one of their backyards.

— Katie Foran-McHale/TNS

Trying to lose stigma

‘Biggest Loser’ gets a makeover, but experts say it's not enough



“The Biggest Loser” contestant Luis Hernandez competes in the fourth episode of Season 17.

NBC

BY MARISA IATI

The Washington Post

“**T**he Biggest Loser” had a big problem.

Since the reality show debuted on NBC in 2004, it had been slammed as a fat-shaming mockery that also harmed the health and long-term weight-management efforts of its contestants. After dropping pounds at an incredible rate on the show, many participants gained back much of the weight in the years that followed.

Enter the reboot, which the program plans to roll out for its 18th season in January: Instead of talking about “getting skinny,” host Bob Harper told People Magazine that the show will focus on “getting healthy.” Contestants will learn how to make nutritious meals and will participate in group therapy for help shifting their lifestyles, promised USA Network, where the next season will run.

“Skinny does not always equate to being healthy,” Harper said in an email. “This is about getting these contestants on the right course to living healthier lives — physically and mentally.”

The show's revamp comes amid a societal shift in how people think and talk about weight management. Instead of focusing on a number on the scale, diet and exercise companies now speak about holistic wellness and self-care. The changes to “The Biggest Loser” reflect that change in ways that make the show less harmful than previous versions, experts say, but the program still presents an unrealistic picture of weight loss.

Participants on “The Biggest Loser” compete for a cash prize by losing the highest percentage of weight during each 30-week season. Trainers teach the contestants nutrition and guide them in sometimes-grueling exercise plans, and participants compete in challenges that can lead to rewards such as an advantage at the next weigh-in. Some past contestants have said, however, that the show encouraged them to make dangerous decisions, such as dehydrating and developing dangerous eating patterns.

Harper said the 2020 season will focus on the reasons that each contestant got to their weight in the first place. Trainers will talk to participants about nutrition and work with

them to create individualized meal plans. Each contestant will leave the show with a nutritionist, a Planet Fitness membership and access to a support group, Harper said.

“So much in weight loss has changed over the past few years, and we want to show Americans that being fit is about healing yourself from the inside out,” Harper said in an email. “Finding those root causes, getting the emotional support and, yes, hard physical work and smart eating are key, but there are other pieces of the puzzle.”

Sarah Adler, a psychologist at the Stanford Eating Disorder and Weight Control Clinic, said she was pleased to see the language used by “The Biggest Loser” catch up with the way experts have talked about weight control for years — by focusing on health, rather than body shape or size. She said the show, however, still “like to make contestants as thin as possible, which impedes them from accepting their bodies and making healthy weight-related decisions.”

“I think the devil's in the details,” Adler said. “If they are paying lip service to making these taxonomic changes or these language changes but still promoting idealized weight and shape, then we're not really getting anywhere.”

The changes are a step in the right direction but barely scrape the surface of the steps the show would need to take to effectively help participants lose weight and keep it off, said Cynthia Thomson, a health promotion sciences professor at the University of Arizona. She praised the program's plan to teach about factors, other than food, that affect weight such as stress and sleep, but she said people's environment, community and family dynamics also play a role.

Thomson said that regardless of other adjustments that the show has made for the upcoming season, its unchanged premise of encouraging contestants to lose weight as quickly as possible is still unhealthy. Weight loss that happens too rapidly often decreases people's metabolic rates — how quickly their bodies use energy — and bone mass, she said.

“When you take people who really have quite significant metabolic dysfunction and body size and you do this rapid weight loss, I

don't care if you help them with sleep or you give them a class on stress or teach them how to breathe and relax,” Thomson said. “It's just not going to be enough if you have put them through this 100-pound weight loss in a very short time period.”

The competitive nature of the show could serve as a motivator for some contestants, especially men and people who enjoy the publicity, Thomson said. She said studies have shown that competitive programs with rewards, such as workplace weight-loss programs, can incentivize people to change their behaviors.

Other mental and emotional effects of the show are less positive, experts have said. In 2012, researchers at Ohio's Bowling Green State University found that watching “The Biggest Loser” increased viewers’ dislike of overweight people and made them believe more strongly that weight is controllable. The researchers concluded that weight-loss shows contribute to weight stigma.

Harper said no one should be ashamed of struggling with their weight, especially because nearly 40% of Americans are medically obese, and that people should talk openly about weight management.

Although the host and trainers in the show's upcoming season will talk about “getting healthy,” the program's ideals and values remain the same, said Rachel Dubrofsky, a communication professor at the University of South Florida. She said the definition of “healthy,” as portrayed on the show, may end up being as restrictive as “getting skinny.”

“At the end of the day, the message is the same: Through diet and exercise you can be transformed for the better, in specific ways ‘The Biggest Loser’ values,” Dubrofsky said.

Danielle Lindemann, a sociology professor at Lehigh University who studies reality television, said it was unclear how “The Biggest Loser” audiences would respond to the changes, given that most reality-television viewers want to watch high-drama programs.

“It is going to be less voyeuristic for people, and subsequently, less tempting for people to watch,” Lindemann asked, “if it becomes this wholesome show that's more about a celebration of people's health and less a fat-shaming show.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



iStock illustrations

Ward off weight gain this winter

By JILL U. ADAMS
Special to The Washington Post

These cold, dark winter days make me want to curl up with a book, perhaps while munching on holiday cookies.

One could describe my conduct this way: sedentary behavior combined with snacking on sugary treats. A regular practice of these things might well lead to weight gain.

Is winter weight gain a thing? Yes, says Larry Cheskin, who chairs the nutrition department at George Mason University in Northern Virginia. "There is good evidence that it is a thing."

On average, research shows that people gain one to two pounds over the winter months. For instance, a study of 195 people at the National Institutes of Health found weight gain of about one pound between late September and March.

A study of 248 U.S. military personnel, who were enrolled in a weight-loss program, found that people added about two pounds from fall to winter.

Here's something else. There also is evidence that American adults gain one to two pounds each year, gradually accumulating weight over decades. Winter weight gain might be a major culprit, so perhaps we should view the season as a particularly risky time for adding excess padding.

Indeed, 165 subjects in the NIH study returned for a September weigh-in, and, on average, were 1.4 pounds heavier than the year before.

A note: One to two pounds on average means that some people don't gain any weight, while others gain five pounds or more. And in a rude twist of fate, the people who gain the most are more likely to be already overweight or obese.

Why does winter weight gain happen? "The reasons are not that clear," Cheskin says. "I suspect that much of it is what we would call behavioral."

That means eating more and exercising less.

"The change in eating behavior is key," says Michael Gavin, a physician at the University of Rochester Medical Center. Overeating, snacking and choosing

comfort foods over fruits and vegetables are some of the eating habits that could occur.

Some researchers have narrowed the time window to look at weight gain over the weeks spanning Thanksgiving through New Year's. In the NIH study, people gained 0.8 pounds, on average, during that period. And in a second study with military personnel, it was 0.4 pounds.

People celebrate a variety of things over the holidays — seeing family, religious events, the turning of the calendar — and they do it with rich foods, desserts and drinks. Perhaps we should mention the holiday spirit — a spirit of permission to overindulge. I mean, who's celebrating!

"The holidays are not insignificant," Cheskin says. There are more social events, an increase in the variety of foods and more drinking. Alcohol adds calories and undermines self-control.

But it's not just overeating at holiday parties that's to blame. When it's cold and snowy — or slushy or icy — outside, people spend more time indoors, which in turn can mean getting less physical activity.

Research backs up the exercise slowdown. A review of 37 studies found that people are most physically active in spring and summer and least in winter.

Also, it's easy to feel bored when you're cooped up inside — and boredom may lead you to snack more.

So if wintertime in general, and the holidays in particular, are a precarious time for gaining weight — weight that you might keep forever — then what can be done?

First, be aware that winter weight gain can happen. Pay attention to your diet and try to keep your activity level up.

Weighting yourself every day is key, says Margaret Fahey, a doctoral student at the

University of Memphis and first author on the military personnel's weight-gain studies. Study participants used electronic scales that sent data directly to the researchers. Fahey and her colleagues observed that during the winter months, people often skipped their daily weigh-ins.

The researchers also noticed that the participants who had most recently enrolled in weight-loss intervention gained the least weight. That suggests that when motivation is high, winter weight gain can be avoided.

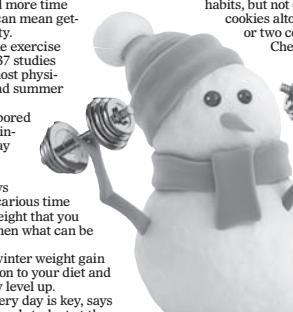
Motivation can help you stick to good weight maintenance behaviors, such as daily weigh-ins, as well as tracking diet and activity. There are a number of apps that can make it easier to track what you eat and how much you move.

"Winter weight gain is common," Fahey says. "Which might indicate that weight maintenance strategies are important to implement during winter."

Gavin recommends being mindful of your eating habits, but not overly restrictive. Don't try to avoid cookies altogether, he says, but limit yourself to one or two cookies.

Cheskin says it's important to understand your own tendencies. When counseling patients who want to lose weight, he starts by asking them what they think has contributed to their weight gain. Do you eat when you're sad or bored? Do you plan your meals? Do social outings — or family — interfere with healthy eating? Are there medical issues involved?

"You hear about lots of factors relating to weight," Cheskin says. You don't need to attend to all of them, he says — just the ones that are specific to you.



WEEKEND: FAMILY

Free time for parents

Author maps a plan to grab your life back, 20 minutes at a time

By CINDY DAMPIER
Chicago Tribune

The holidays are over (barely), so it's time for a little self-congratulation: You got the gifts, you did the decorating, you entertained the family, you attended the winter concert, you baked cookies with the kids, you flirted with your spouse ... give yourself a high-five!

And please, please give yourself a breather.

Your health depends on it — not to mention your family's well-being.

As stress and its costs to individuals and society come under increasing scrutiny, experts are lining up to point the finger at a burgeoning problem: the stress brought on by today's intense parenting styles. "We live in an age of intensive parenting," says Chicago author Rachel Bertsche, author of "The Kids Are in Bed: Finding Time for Yourself in the Chaos of Parenting." "And people feel, for many different reasons, all this pressure to be with their kids all the time and do the absolute most for them."

Bertsche's book, out Jan. 7, is a practical argument for a different approach — one in which parental free time is a priority. "What I'm trying to say is that everyone benefits, parents as well as kids, when you take time to step away, refuel and take care of yourself," she says. She has a few key pieces of advice that will help you make that happen.

Think in 20-minute chunks

Bertsche says many people conceptualize free time as an hour or more — but breaking that thought pattern can open your eyes to the free time you do have. "You may have trouble finding an hour to do something for yourself," she says, "but you probably have smaller chunks of time in your day. If you're willing to accept that, you can actually get a lot of benefit from a smaller amount of time. Twenty minutes is kind of a magic number for a lot of things: think about the 20-minute nap, for instance. You can get a lot out of 20 minutes."

Watch out for mental load

In a survey of parents conducted for Bertsche's book, "71% of parents said their open time didn't feel free because of mental load," she says. "Imagine you're getting a massage, but you spend the time thinking about all the things that you should be doing or need to get done while you're getting that massage. That's mental load, and it's not relaxing." When you find a 20-minute chunk of free time, Bertsche says, give yourself the permission to set aside those thoughts. "Too often," says Bertsche, "people don't let themselves lean into the free time and actually enjoy it."

Keep a list handy

In her research for the book, Bertsche discovered that parents who find themselves with some unexpected free time (like that 20 minutes you spent just waiting outside a ballet class, or a pocket of time when your partner takes the kids to the park) suffer from a common problem — they don't know what to do with it. "The pressure to use the time wisely is the thing that makes us end up doing nothing at all," Bertsche says. That's why Bertsche

recommends that you keep lists of things you like to do that can be done with little to no prep beforehand. "Here are things I like to do for me: Watch a TV show, read a book, go for a walk," she says. "You can keep it simple, and when you have 20 minutes, check your list. It takes a little bit of the work out of it and that helps. Anything you can do to remove the mental load."

Invest in relationships

Bertsche spends plenty of time on advice for making couple time a priority. But she also points out the relationship many parents think of as a "luxury, rather than a necessity" — friend time. In her research, the 15% of parents who reported a healthy balance of free time versus kid time also reported that they made more time for friends and spent more time away from social media and screens than other parents. "Time spent with friends is a huge benefit to our physical and mental health," she says. "We should really think of it like exercise, something that we need to prioritize for our health."

Remember it's for the kids

If you're determined to sacrifice yourself and every minute of your time on the altar of parenting, maybe this argument will sway you: You're really doing it for the kids. "When you ask kids what they want," says Bertsche, "they say they want parents who are less stressed. Not parents who are there all the time but thinking about 1,000 different things." In other words, you can't be at your best for your children if you never invest in your own resilience and calm. Finding free time means building up your reserves to meet parenting's daily challenges.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



The power of being positive to yourself

I had taken the part-time library job out of desperation. After interviewing and being rejected for three other positions because I "didn't have enough experience" (a common problem for military spouses), I accepted the offer to work weekend night shifts at the boarding school library.

Although I was grateful to be employed, the job branded me with a permanent feeling of defeat. I had been working as a freelance writer for more than a decade and was a licensed attorney, but the 10-hour-a-week library job represented my first outside employment since the '90s, when I quit my legal job to stay home with the kids.

The decision to look for outside employment had been a tough one after so many years. But I had mustered the courage, telling myself that, although I had gaps in my résumé, employers would understand the challenges of military life, and would see me as a capable candidate.

Three tough rejections later, I had come to terms with the brutal fact that no one would interpret my status as a military spouse as "work experience" — I would need to prove myself as an employer would believe in me. Not an easy task, because I didn't always believe.

"You're stupid. You talk too much. You're fat. You're boring." These were the subconscious insults I had hurled at myself since adolescence. During periods of insecurity and stress, I unknowingly turned on myself, engaging in an inner dialogue that was self-defeating and counterproductive.

Having grown up in arguably the last generation of hard blocks, before millennials made narcissism and entitlement acceptable, I hid my insecurities and got on with the business of life. Despite my secret lack of confidence, or perhaps because of it, I pushed myself to earn degrees, seek relationships, pursue a career, succeed in marriage, commit to parenting and create a healthy household for our military family.

But those insecurities were there, constantly threatening to derail me.

It wasn't until my teenage daughter began battling her own inner naysayer that I became cognizant that "negative self-talk" was a thing. Like many adolescents and teenagers, and like me when I was her age, my daughter had begun to hate herself without truly understanding why. Although the reasons are complex, negative self-talk can develop when a teenager becomes aware of social hierarchies, her physical appearance and her place in the world. This competitive environment, made worse by social media and parental expectations, can lead to feelings of inadequacy and negative coping mechanisms.

Research has shown that those who engage in negative self-talk are more anxious, depressed and socially maladjusted. Therapy often involves training oneself to use positive inner dialogue to avoid the downward spiral of negativity. Essentially, words matter, and can have a powerful impact on one's mental well-being.

Two months into my library job, I was behind the circulation desk, hiding away from the scrutiny of the students and faculty, who surely thought I was an idiot. A door opened, and a resident faculty member entered with her three young daughters. They often came in at this time, to return books and check out more. I saw the soft brown curls of the eldest, who couldn't have been more than 5 or 6, bobbing by the desk at her mother's side. "Go ahead, you can put it there," her mother whispered.

While her sisters fought over who would drop books into the return slot, the one with brown curls reached an arm up over the desk and slapped something pink onto the wood surface. I turned back to my computer, and the three sisters toddled off to the children's section.

A few minutes later, I was scanning their newly selected books and printing due date slips. It was so sweet, I thought, that a book about a cartoon rabbit was such cause for excitement.

And then I saw it. The pink note stuck to the desk. Peeling it away, I deciphered the words scrawled in pencil.

"You Are Amazing," it read. I felt the power of those three simple words, and for that moment, I believed.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesofflife.com

Email: meatandpotatoesofflife@googlemail.com



You can't be at your best for your children if you never invest in your own resilience and calm.

iStock

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

DOWN FOR THE COUNT
BY LAURA TAYLOR KINNEL / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Laura Taylor Kinnel, of Newtown, Pa., teaches math and is the director of studies at a Friends boarding school near Philadelphia. She got her interest in crosswords at a young age through her grandmother, who used to solve the Sunday Times puzzle and ask for Laura's "help." —W.S.

The Times. —W.S.

CROSS
1 TV-screen initis.
4 Steinful
7 Cut (off)
10 "Nope"
13 Lucky strikes?
15 Massage target
17 Capital of Belarus
19 Spa amenity
20 1/x, for x
24 Top type
25 Hay-fever irritant
26 Online payment option
27 Record holder for the most Indianapolis 500 laps led (644)
29 Lowly workers

30 Mythical being depicted in bronze in Copenhagen Harbor
31 Followers of dos
32 Home of the N.C.A.A.'s Rhody the Ram, for short

34 Director DuVerney

36 Govt. org. often impersonated on scan calls

37 Picked a card

38 Abstainers ... or the central column's answers vis-à-vis 20-, 39-, 74- and 101-Across, respectively

44 One in a pocketful

45 Has finished

47 Speed that would enable a 23-minute D.C.-to-L.A. flight

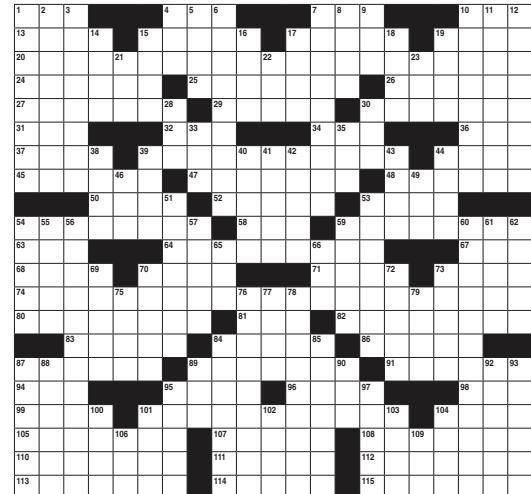
48 Where fans are often placed on high?
50 Org. whose academy's motto in English is "The sea yields to knowledge."
52 One who might give you a shot
53 Miss
54 Food that Marge Simpson once served with "a whisper of MSG"
58 Big name in denim
59 Collected \$200, say
63 "Te _____"
64 Former supermarket chain holding diapers and strollers
67 "Egads!"
68 Quite a tale
71 Charitable offering
73 Film character who says, "Kiss me as if it were the last time!"
74 It postulates a space-time fabric
75 Professional budget directives
81 San Francisco's _____ Valley
82 Radio medium
83 Renaissance-themed festival
84 Tears to pieces
86 Who once had all 10 of the top 10 Billboard hits simultaneously
87 "The Gift of the Magi" author
89 "Seriously?"
91 Gobbles (down)
94 Doze (off)
95 It's pitchfork-shaped

96 College town of George Washington Carver
98 Hitler's partner
99 "Absolutely!"
101 Little Richard hit with "the most inspired rock lyrics ever recorded" per Rolling Stone
104 Sea eagle
105 Many-starred N.H.L. All-Star Jagr
107 Sheepish
108 Fashionable
110 Nonbinary identity
111 Focus of an egoist's gaze
112 Magazine with animal Women of the Year Awards
113 President Ford and others
114 Traditional, if bulky, presents in Santa's bag
115 Opening words?

DOWN

1 Super bowl trophy
2 Deep-fried dough
3 Picked nits
4 _____ tear (athlete's injury)
5 Thieves' place
6 Yosemitic attraction
7 Hides one's true nature
8 Grows with the 2012 chart-topping album "Up All Night," to fans
9 It's pitchfork-shaped
10 "Why do you ask?" response

11 The 1 in (1,2), in math
12 Work times, typically
14 Phaser setting
15 Admiral Graf (German W.W. II ship)
16 Leaf (through)
17 Bearing
18 One might be taken in protest
19 Longtime N.P.R. host Diane
21 Statelet, inhabited minimally since 2000: Abbr.
22 Complement of turtledoles in a Christmas song
23 Obsolete TV companion
28 Paris's _____ La Fayette
30 Disfigure
33 _____ sleep
35 Perturb
38 "The Caine Mutiny" author
39 End of some school names, for short
40 Orbicularis (eyelid-closing muscle)
41 "We _____ Kings"
42 What fools might make of themselves
43 _____ quote
44 Joint winner of F.I.P.A. Player of the Year award in 2000
46 Top-level foreign policy grp.
49 Monopoly quartet: Abbr.
51 Fold
53 Fuel line
54 Wallop



55 1935 Triple Crown winner

56 Top-ranked professional tennis player for a record 237 consecutive weeks

57 Ark contents

58 _____ fast one

60 Labor-day setting?

61 "Beau" _____

62 Signs off on

63 "I tell ya!"

66 Charlotte of "The Facts of Life"

69 Universal self, in Hinduism

70 Preserves something?

72 Houston A.L.'ers

73 Trump who wrote 2017's "Raising Trump"

75 Tiny margin of victory

76 When one usually gets through customs

77 Purple pool ball

78 Brushed up on

79 Lucky-ticket-holder's cry

84 Famed Chicago steakhouses

85 A couple of Bible books

87 Completely unrestrained

88 Tribute

89 Swollen, as a lip

90 Drain, as blood

92 Swiss dish

93 Derisive expressions

95 Runs smoothly

97 They can't do without does

100 Prefix for a polygon with 140° interior angles

101 Headed for overtime

102 A short rest, so to speak

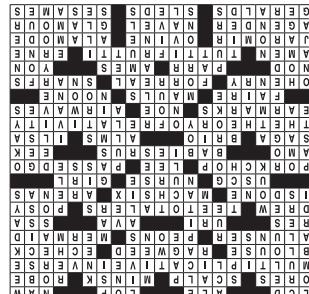
103 He: Lat.

104 Top female baby name of 2014-18

106 Year that Michaelangelo's "The Crucifixion of St. Peter" was completed

109 Things the Energizer bunny may need

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



GANSTON STREET



"Gunston Street" is drawn by Basil Zaviski. Email him at gunstonstreet@yahoo.com, and visit gunstonstreet.com.

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FACES

Carrying on without Carrie



Disney/Lucasfilm

Through remaining footage and some digital wizardry, Carrie Fisher, right, was able to reprise her role as General Leia Organa for "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker." Also pictured: Daisy Ridley.

'Rise of Skywalker' creators rose to the challenge after Fisher's death

BY MICHAEL CAVANA
The Washington Post

This was supposed to be Carrie Fisher's movie — her center spotlight after the previous two films in Disney's modern Star Wars trilogy successfully featured Harrison Ford and Mark Hamill, her castmates across four decades.

"It's nothing short of heartbreaking that she wasn't here to collaborate on this film, because we couldn't possibly tell the story without her," J.J. Abrams says of directing "The Rise of Skywalker" without Fisher, who died three years ago last month.

Ever since her death, those creatively involved with the Skywalker Saga — which seemingly concluded with the Dec. 20 opening of "Rise" — have tried to honor Fisher's memory while also wrestling with how to present her iconic character, Leia Organa, on screen.

The starkest misstep since was a digital motion-capture representation of a young Leia briefly in the one-off film "Rogue One" — an eerie effect that many fans thought fell squarely into the "uncanny valley."

Lucasfilm announced last year that Fisher would appear in "Rise," but assuaged fans about how the posthumous "performance" would be handled.

"We would never consider recasting," Abrams said. "And we wouldn't want to do a digital character."

Abrams had worked with Fisher on his 2015 "Star Wars" reboot — "I knew her a little bit for a long time before we did 'Force Awakens,'" he says — and

“When we were constructing scenes around Carrie, we would try to see what Carrie was doing and just look at the warmth and her wit and all these things that Carrie was.”

Chris Terrio
“The Rise of Skywalker” cowriter

Fisher's presence is tastefully crafted from existing footage of her in character as Leia.

"Originally the frustration I felt at cutting out these scenes that we had shot in 'Force Awakens,'" Abrams says, "were suddenly the relief that we needed in prepping 'The Rise of Skywalker.'"

In several scenes in "Rise," we see a strong-minded Leia guiding another Force-sensitive Jedi warrior, the new trilogy's central hero Rey (Daisy Ridley), to take on the Empire, including Leia's own son, Kylo Ren (Adam Driver).

Chris Terrio, the "Rise of Skywalker" cowriter, says helping script Leia's new scenes required "every skill that I've ever picked up along the way."

"You would have scenes that honestly were shot with some different context in mind," Terrio says. "But you'd want to get to the emotional truth of what was going on in the scene so that we could ... stay true to her acting choices."

"So when we were reconstructing scenes around Carrie," the cowriter continues, "we would try to see what Carrie was doing and just look at the warmth and her wit and all these things that Carrie was."

Although Fisher's screen time is less than once planned, there is a power to her presence.

"If she had been around, (are there) other things we would have asked for and written? Of course," Abrams says. "But the fact we had this — that allowed us to incorporate her into the movie in a way that makes me feel like she's in the film and in a significant way — and in a way that I truly believe she would be happy with."

YouTube docuseries on Bieber coming in January

Justin Bieber is launching a docuseries about creating his new album on YouTube, the platform where the singer originally got his start in music more than a decade ago.

YouTube announced Tuesday that "Justin Bieber: Seasons" will debut Jan. 27. The 10-episode series will follow the pop star while he records his first new album since 2015. Before releasing his debut song in 2009, Bieber gained popularity from posting his performances of cover songs on YouTube.

"When I was getting started, YouTube provided me a platform and a community where I could share music, experiences and moments with my fans," Bieber said in a statement. "It feels great to partner with YouTube for this original documentary series. I want my fans to be part of this journey."

Bieber, 25, is releasing a new song, "Yummy," on Friday.

YouTube says the series will "feature a behind-the-scenes look at Bieber's private life, including never-before-seen footage of his wedding to Hailey Bieber and his day-to-day alongside those in his inner circle." The series will also show Bieber reflecting "on the highs and lows of growing up in the public eye as he invites his fans on the journey leading up to the release of the highly-anticipated and most personal album of his career."

Theron, Craig among Golden Globe presenters

Charlize Theron, Octavia Spencer and Daniel Craig are among the first presenters announced for Sunday's Golden Globe Awards. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association also announced Thursday that other presenters will include Sofia Vergara, Kerry Washington, Tiffany Haddish, Glenn Close and Will Ferrell. Kate McKinnon and Denee Benton will also present.

Ricky Gervais will host for the fifth time. Gervais also emceed the ceremony from 2010 to 2012 and 2016.

Tom Hanks will receive the Cecil B. DeMille Award, an accolade for film. Ellen DeGeneres will be honored with the Carol Burnett Award, which focuses on life achievement in television.

Other news

■ Actress Michelle Williams is engaged to "Fosse/Verdon" director Thomas Kail and is said to be expecting a baby with him. If the report is true, this would be the second child for Williams, who has a 14-year-old daughter, Matilda, with late actor Heath Ledger.

■ Jack Sheldon, an acclaimed jazz musician whose trumpet graced the award-winning song "The Shadow of Your Smile" and who was known to TV viewers as the puckish sidekick to talk show host Merv Griffin, has died. He was 88.

From wire services

Golden Globes to serve meatless menu at awards ceremony

Associated Press

The Golden Globes is going with a meatless menu for its 77th annual awards show.

Guests will be served a 100% plant-based meal just ahead of showtime Sunday. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association said Thursday that it wants the initiative to raise environmental awareness about food consumption and waste.

"If there's a way we can, not change the world, but save the planet, maybe we can get the Golden Globes to send a signal and draw attention to the issue about climate change," HFPA president Lorenzo Soria said. "The food

we eat, the way we grow the food we eat, the way we dispose of the food is one of the large contributors to the climate crisis."

The annual awards ceremony will air Jan. 6 live on AFN-prime Atlantic and in the evening on AFN-Movie.

Soria said there was some initial push back about changing the menu just about two weeks before the show, but the hotel eventually agreed on the new menu.

"People were basically saying it's too late, we're ready with all the orders, the holidays and all that," he said. "But after we began discussions, meeting for one or two days, (the hotel) accepted the change completely. They started to experiment with how to do plant-based meals that

was not just their symbolic steps, but also something that guests will enjoy."

Items on the main entree include king oyster mushrooms scallops and wild mushroom risotto, along with roasted baby purple and green Brussels sprouts and carrots. A chilled golden beet soup will be served as an appetizer.

HFPA partnered with Icelandic Glacial, a naturally alkaline and sustainably-sourced natural spring water. The water will be served in glass bottles to eliminate plastic waste in the ballroom and red carpet, which is reused at other events throughout the year.

Soria called the food "excellent" after a recent taste-testing.


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2 VIEWS ON MILITARY SPENDING

Stop redefining our planning downward

By GISELLE DONNELLY

InsideSources.com

One of President Donald Trump's longest-standing political promises has been to rebuild U.S. military strength. The White House boasts of "historic strides" in this effort, and Trump's tweet celebrating the passage of this year's defense appropriations bill boasted of "new planes, ships, missiles, rockets and equipment of every kind, and all made right here in the USA."

Alas, the president's claim is more hot than cattle: While the Pentagon's annual "topline" has crept past the \$700 billion mark, it remains the case that about 10% of that amount is in the Overseas Contingency Operations account that mostly goes to pay for the continued costs of military deployments in the Middle East and elsewhere. This is not merely a haphazard approach to managing the budget that foretells longer-term planning, it reflects the fact that the hoped-for "Trump Buildup" is, as the saying goes, fake news.

Indeed, the true measures of national purpose — calculating defense spending as a slice of gross domestic product or of federal spending — reveal that national security continues to diminish as an American priority. Under Trump, the Pentagon budget has dipped to its pre-9/11 low of less than 3% of GDP and 15% of overall federal spending, dwarfed by mandatory and "entitlement" spending (about 62% of federal outlays and 13% of GDP). Servicing the national debt, the most "mandatory" spending of all, accounts for an additional 7-plus% of government expenditures.

Thus the armed services, as they prepare for next year's budget request, are weighing substantial program cuts. Consider the Navy, which Trump promised to expand to 355 warships — it's now about 300, depending on what the definition of "ship" is — by the end of the decade. Last week, the respected trade publication Defense News reported that the sea service is likely to ax five of 12 planned purchases of its current line of destroyers over the next five years, as well as delaying starts on attack submarine and frigate builds while decommissioning four of its 22 aging Ticonderoga-class cruisers and canceling life-extension refits for others. According to Navy planners, the size of the fleet is likely to drop to 287 ships.

As has been the case since the end of the Cold War, these sorts of reductions are being framed as investments in new technologies and a preference for quality over quantity. And, considering the constantly stagnating pace of U.S. military modernization and the increase in adversary, particularly Chinese, military power, there is a logic in that argument.

Yet the one thing that is still unlearned — lesson of the past generation — is the shortfall in integrity rather than capability. In the South China Sea, for example, the problem is not that Chinese ships and other weaponry is superior to that of the United States and its allies, it's that they're there and we're not.

The shifting balance of global military power is, however, less a product of inadequate spending or lagging technological innovation as it is a failure of strategic imagination.

American planning remains, as it was against the Soviet Union, driven by the assessment of threats rather than an appreciation of geopolitical interests; we know our adversaries but not ourselves. We have forgotten the fundamental insight of the Truman administration that "domination of the potential power of Eurasia" by a hostile power or coalition "would be strategically and politically unacceptable to the United States." We can't remember what our purpose is, what victory means.

Consequently we have been constantly content to redefine our military planning downward. Where we once strove to build to a "global, many-and-simultaneous" campaign standard — as early as 1940, Congress passed a "Two-Ocean Navy" act — we now hope to field a one-war force. But this hope is no method for a global power, let alone a nation that not so long ago considered itself "history's sole superpower." The proper question to ask about defense spending is not, "How much is enough?" but rather, "What is sufficient to defend our global interests?"

These interests have long been defined, both by the nature of international politics and the nature of our American experiment. As both an Atlantic- and Pacific-facing nation, we seek a favorable balance of power across Eurasia. As a trading people, we seek secure access to the commercial "commons" of the seas, skies, space and, nowadays, communications networks. As a free people, we seek to further the natural political rights of humanity — a "balance of power that favors freedom."

This may — indeed, it will — cost us more than 3 cents of our national dollar. It is the principal purpose of our federal government, not a tertiary purpose. And our failure to pay the cost is, as the headlines daily remind us, a false economy.

Finally, the value of our security, measured in prosperity but most of all by liberty, is incalculable.

Redirect that money to more-vital needs

By ROBERT WEISSMAN

InsideSources.com

Pentagon spending is, literally, out of control — and it is making America weaker, not stronger. It's time — past time — for a fundamental reorientation of the federal government's spending, with Pentagon spending slimmed and the resultant savings reallocated to address domestic and humanitarian priorities.

The almost three-quarters of a trillion dollars in the annual Pentagon budget doesn't reflect any reasonable assessment of national security threats, common-sense priority setting or any kind of honest reckoning with the costs and benefits of an additional billion dollars for warfighting. The result is that we are wasting hundreds of billions of dollars, fueling endless war and diverting money from other vital needs.

The Pentagon eats up more of the federal government's discretionary budget — \$738 billion for the current fiscal year — than all other discretionary spending combined. Think about that for a moment: The Pentagon has been gifted more resources than our diplomatic and peace-building agencies, more than the Environmental Protection Agency, more than our education and housing programs, and more than we spend on scientific research ... combined. At the same time, the Pentagon is unable to pass an audit. For 2020, the Pentagon received a \$20 billion budget boost despite being unable to explain how it spent the outlandish amount it received in 2019.

The endless sums thrown at the Pentagon aren't commensurate with any threat we face. Pentagon spending is more than the next seven top military spending countries combined. Even worse, bottomless Pentagon spending is intertwined with the endless wars that have left us and the world less safe. Military and political figures of all political persuasions agree with this basic assessment, and the "Afghanistan Papers" recently published by The Washington Post show that, despite public proclamations to the contrary, top political and military officials have recognized all along that the Afghanistan War was an unwinnable disaster.

We have spent and continue to spend unfathomable sums on endless war. Researchers at Brown University put the total at \$6.4 trillion, including cost of caring for injured veterans. The wars have killed more than 800,000 people directly and many more indirectly, all while failing in their mission and leaving us less safe.

We need to pull back from constant and ever-expanding warfighting and instead invest much more energy (and resources) in diplomatic measures to reduce international conflict. We need to be the great international challenges that create instability, but are also amenable to military solutions: poverty, newly emerging diseases, wealth inequality, all, above all, climate crisis. And we need to reallocate hundreds of billions every year away from the Pentagon to address problems at home that parallel those global challenges: ensuring health care for all, addressing economic inequality and transforming our economy to rely on efficiency and renewable energy in order to avert climate catastrophe.

There are plenty of opportunities for massive cuts — on the order of \$200 billion a year or more — in Pentagon spending without damaging national security:

■ We can save \$70 billion or more a year by eliminating a Pentagon slush fund, known as the Overseas Contingency Operations account, that is being used for programs that have no connections to emergencies or contingencies.

■ We can save more than \$40 billion a year by ending reliance on expensive private contractors to do work that more affordable government employees should do, and by eliminating wasteful contracting strategies that skyrocket costs in the final month of a fiscal year.

■ There is a long list of super expensive weapons, like the F-35, that should be eliminated, cut back, or replaced with more cost-effective alternatives.

■ Cutting the number of troops in Afghanistan — or pulling them out altogether — would save tens of billions annually.

For far too long, Pentagon spending has been immune from the kind of scrutiny and common-sense analysis applied to other forms of government spending: Is the money properly accounted for? Are private actors profiteering at public expense? Does the spending address legitimate national priorities? Should we spend another dollar on this program at the expense of alternatives? Is this program achieving its objectives?

When you ask those questions about Pentagon spending, the answer's all point in one direction: We are spending far too much on weapons and war, and on price-gouging and profiteering private contractors. And that spending is starving us of the moneys we need to address key priorities, from education to climate. It's time to reallocate hundreds of billions of Pentagon spending and put people over the Pentagon.

Robert Weissman is president of Public Citizen. Public Citizen is a member of the People Over Pentagon coalition.

Giselle Donnelly is a resident fellow in defense and national security at the American Enterprise Institute.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other state-side syndicates.

Unity can help fight scourge of anti-Semitic attacks

Houston Chronicle

The list of anti-Semitic attacks in the New York area in December is appalling, a litany of hatred that calls out to be condemned and countered.

Starting with the death of three people at a kosher grocery store in Jersey City, N.J., more than a dozen incidents have been reported. These include a 65-year-old man who was beaten and kicked while his assailant yelled anti-Semitic slurs and a 34-year-old woman who was walking with her son when she was hit on the head as her attacker called her a “f---ing Jew.”

The latest assault happened Saturday, when a man wielding a large blade barged into a rabbi's home and stabbed five people during a Hanukkah celebration. The man, who was charged Monday with a hate crime, allegedly searched online for nearby Jewish temples and for “Why did Hitler hate the Jews?”

The rash of attacks is even more troubling when you consider that it is hardly unique. Close to 1,900 incidents of anti-Semitism were reported in 2018, according to the Anti-Defamation League. Anti-Semitic homicides reached their highest level ever last year after the shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh left 11 dead, FBI statistics show. And even while white supremacists led the chant of “Jews will not replace us!” at a 2017 Charlottesville, Va., rally, anti-Semitism can come from across the political spectrum.

“What we’re finding about various attacks is that they don’t fill any one single narrative. Perpetrators are from different backgrounds, express different politics,” Kari Dunn Saratovsky, CEO of Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, told the editorial board. “What they share is a hatred of Jews.”

This hatred is not limited to the U.S., either. Around the world, ugly incidents of bigotry and discrimination are becoming all too common. In France, where 500 anti-Semitic attacks were reported in 2018, a Jewish cemetery was desecrated last month — swastikas spray-painted on dozens of gravestones. In Germany, where a recent survey found that 1 in 4 hold anti-Semitic beliefs, a gunman attacked a synagogue during Yom Kippur, killing two people.

This rise in anti-Semitism must be met with a greater force, one that we must all contribute to spreading. Houston is a diverse city with a thriving Jewish community that deserves and welcomes support.

“It takes all of us to stand up together and unite against this hate and perpetual violence,” Saratovsky said. “We can’t remain silent here. We have to call for action, and that’s on all of us.”

The only way to fight hate is through love. Meeting one another, and understanding one another, is a great way to start.

Texas law allowing concealed weapons saved lives at church

The Dallas Morning News

On Sunday, the kind of news no one wants to see slid across the landscape. There was a shooting at a church in White Settlement outside of Fort Worth, and there were casualties. But as we delved into the details, we will admit feeling first a sense of relief that the loss of life was not larger — two innocent lives were lost along with the assailant — and then a sense of gratitude.



TOM FOX, THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS/AP

Church and community members gather at West Freeway Church of Christ in White Settlement, Texas, for a candlelight vigil Monday. A gunman shot and killed two people before an armed security officer returned fire, killing him during their service Sunday.

Our gratitude, which was also felt by Gov. Greg Abbott, comes from the knowledge that this mass shooter would have likely incurred a lot more mayhem except for the fact that a good man and a volunteer member of the church's security team immediately shot back. In response to the era of mass shootings that we are in, Texas specifically enacted a law to allow law-abiding citizens to carry concealed weapons in church (and elsewhere, unless specifically prohibited at that location). That law saved lives this weekend in North Texas.

Regardless of whether people like this fact, it remains true that there have been at least two church shootings in Texas in recent years that ended because law-abiding citizens had the means and willingness to fight back. The second occurred two years ago in Sutherland Springs, and unfortunately resulted in the loss of many more lives. But as in this most recent shooting, in that incident the assailant did not survive after good men responded with force.

The truth is that there isn't a solution that will bring an end to all mass attacks, which is one reason we've supported such things as creating a federal center to evaluate local, state and federal laws to find the cracks violent criminals exploit to obtain firearms. But it is also true that part of the set of solutions will have to involve enabling innocent people to protect themselves and each other up to and including fighting back.

If that's tough to consider, there is another hard reality cast into sharp relief by this latest shooting. As in many other incidents — whether it's a knife-wielding attacker on a Jewish community in New York or a synagogue, church, mosque or other shooting — the attack in North Texas was an assault on a community, on a group of people freely associating with each other and working toward common purpose.

These attacks are pernicious and act with particular purpose to destroy communities. They seek to kill more than individual lives. They seek to kill social bonds that bind us together. They seek to divide and isolate, to leave survivors feeling alone or unsafe in any common space. So it is all the more important for us to stand together in defense against hateful, divisive and evil purpose. It is civil society itself that's under attack.

Piecemeal moves strengthen case for higher minimum wage

The New York Times

Opponents of minimum-wage laws have long argued that companies have only so much money and, if required to pay higher wages, they will employ fewer workers.

Now there is evidence that such concerns, never entirely sincere, are greatly overstated.

Over the past five years, a wave of in-

creases in state and local minimum-wage standards has pushed the average effective minimum wage in the United States to the highest level on record. The average worker must be paid at least \$11.80 an hour — more after inflation than the last peak, in the 1960s, according to an analysis by the economist Ernie Tedeschi.

And even as wages have marched upward, job growth remains strong. The unemployment rate at the end of 2019 will be lower than the previous year for the 10th straight year.

The interventions by some state and local governments, however, do not obviate the need for federal action. To the contrary. Millions of workers are being left behind because 21 states still use the federal standard, \$7.25 an hour, which has not risen since 2009 — the longest period without an increase since the introduction of a federal standard in the 1930s.

Across much of America, the minimum wage rose again with the start of 2020. In Maine and Colorado it reached \$12 an hour; in Washington State, \$13.50; in New York City, \$15. Workers in the rest of the country also deserve raises. The time has come for the federal government to act.

House Democrats passed legislation in July that would gradually increase the federal standard to \$15 an hour in 2025 — likely raising the real value above the peak value in the late 1960s — and most of the Democrats running for president have endorsed the legislation. Last year, only about 430,000 people — or 0.5% of hourly workers — were paid the federal minimum. The share has fallen in recent years as state and local governments, and some employers, have stepped in. But a much larger group of workers stand to benefit, because they now earn less than the proposed minimum. The Congressional Budget Office estimated a \$15 minimum hourly wage would raise the pay of at least 17 million workers.

Among the beneficiaries: people who work for tips. Federal law lets businesses pay \$2.13 an hour to waiters, bartenders and others who get tips, so long as the total of tips and wages meets the federal minimum. The legislation would end that rule; the same minimum would apply to all hourly employees. Opponents of the change argue customers will curtail tipping and workers will end up with less money. But eight states, including Minnesota, Montana and Oregon, already have a universal minimum, including for tipped workers, and restaurant workers in those states make more money.

Crucially, the legislation also would require automatic adjustments in the minimum wage to keep pace with wage growth in the broader economy. The current minimum rises only when Congress is in the mood. As a result, the purchasing power of the federal minimum wage has eroded by nearly 40% over the last half-century. A full-time worker making the minimum wage cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment in almost any American city.

The simplistic view that minimum-wage laws cause unemployment commanded such a broad consensus in the 1980s that this editorial board came out against the federal minimum in 1987, calling it “an idea whose time has passed,” and citing as evidence “a virtual consensus among economists.” The old critique is still put forward regularly by the restaurant industry and other major employers of low-wage workers.

But evidence that any such effects are relatively small has been piling up for several decades. A groundbreaking study published in 1993 by the economists David Card and Alan Krueger examined a minimum-wage rise in New Jersey by comparing fast-food restaurants there and in an adjacent part of Pennsylvania. It found no impact on employment.

This prompted other economists to test the standard theory. This year, the British government and the economist Arindrajit Dube to review the results accumulated over the last quarter-century. Dube reported the sum total of the research showed minimum-wage increases raised compensation while producing a “very muted effect” on employment.

More than doubling the current federal standard would be a significant change, and it is not without risk. It is possible that a national \$15 standard would produce the kinds of damage critics have long predicted; the Congressional Budget Office puts the potential increase in unemployment somewhere between zero and 3.7 million people, essentially acknowledging the effects are unpredictable. Workers may be most vulnerable in areas where prevailing wages are relatively low.

But the successful increases in minimum-wage standards across a diverse range of states and cities suggest the broader risk is worth taking. The American economy is generating plenty of jobs; the problem is in the paychecks. The solution is a \$15 federal minimum wage.

Stock market performance a pleasant surprise for some

The Wall Street Journal

Regarding the movement of equity prices, we associate with the words of Alan “Ace” Greenberg, the head of Bear Stearns during the 1987 market crash: “Stocks fluctuate, next question.” The good news in 2019 is that mostly they fluctuated up, which offers a lesson or two.

Stock prices fell Monday, no doubt in part as investors took profits before the end of the year. But what profits they probably are. With one day of trading left in 2019, the S&P 500 was up 29% for the year, the Nasdaq Composite had risen 35%, and even the dowdy Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 22%. Apple and Microsoft, which drove much of the increase in the Nasdaq, each now have market capitalizations of more than \$1.2 trillion.

Anyone who sold a year ago missed a major boost in net worth, yet at the time the investor mood was negative.

Some pooh folks probably even heeded the infamous Oct. 21, 2016, article in Politico that began: “Wall Street is set up for a major crash if Donald Trump shocks the world on Election Day and wins the White House.” The S&P 500 was then trading at about 2200. It closed Monday at 3221.

The lesson here is that, as Warren Buffett likes to say, don’t bet against the United States to succeed. America makes mistakes, voters sometimes hand power to misguided politicians, and the public sometimes succumbs to financial manias that turn into panics and crashes. But left to work, trade and invest without too much political interference, Americans unleash their energies in productive fashion. Stocks fluctuate, but over time they go up — often in years you least expect it.

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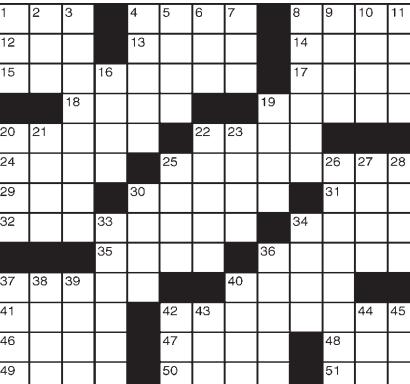


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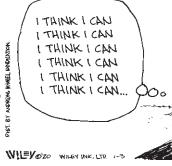
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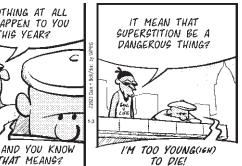
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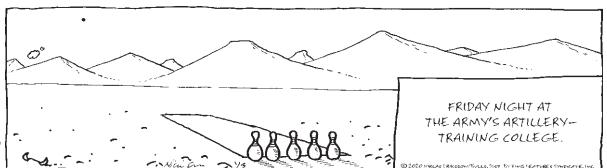
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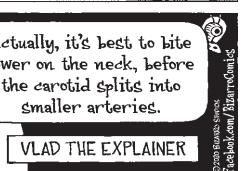
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Carpe Diem



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VLAD THE EXPLAINER

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ACROSS

1 Bond rating
4 Mater lead-in
8 Hourglass fill
12 Have
13 Mama — Elliot
14 Modern taxi rival
15 Like some
boots or socks
17 Gilpin of "Frasier"
18 Trucker with
a handle
19 Man of morals?
20 Fusses
22 Shortened wd.
24 Japanese noodle
25 Quad-
strengthening
exercise
29 Command
to Rover
30 Gabriel, for one
31 Noon, on a
sundial
32 Seriously
embroiled
34 Locale
35 Bryn —
36 Pondered
37 Jewish folklore
figure
40 Arrears
41 Winged
42 Automatic, as
a reaction
46 Beatnik's assent
47 Accomplishment
48 Born

21 Thor's father
22 Wrath
23 Pager sound
25 Recognized
26 Current
27 Evening, in an ad
28 Conked out
30 Comedian
Sandler
33 Come into view
34 Pt. of a sentence
36 Encounters
37 Pace
38 Shoppe
description
39 Cannies milk
40 Campus bigwig
42 Col. Sanders'
chain
43 PreFix with natal
44 Old Oldsmobile
45 Crucial

Answer to Previous Puzzle

M	A	L	I	Z	A	F	E	W
A	R	A	B	E	L	G	A	S
A	I	L	S	G	E	I	N	T
M	A	I	T	A	L	O	L	A
A	N	T	O	I	N	E	T	T
T	A	C	I	Z	O	O	I	O
E	L	A	N	T	O	N	S	C
S	T	U	R	O	N	P	E	S
S	I	L	H	O	E	T	E	T
H	E	R	A	I	R	A	V	E
I	G	O	R	S	I	R	W	I
D	O	N	S	T	D	S	L	W

1-3

CRYPTOQUIP

K X O Z , X U U X I M T Z V J Z B O H O H

D L H Z X D X C C G X T P O T F P V L W .

J R L W I R L F B Z Q M B M I M L T G M I

K X V Z C U I M Z M T H M H !

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: BECAUSE I DISLIKE RAPPING ON DOORS, I MOSTLY RING DOORBELLS. YES, I'M PRETTY IN-KNOCK-OUS. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: Z equals T

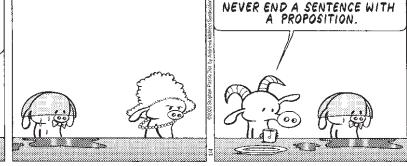
Frazz



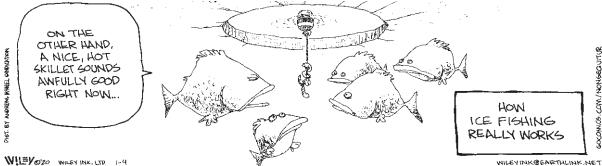
Dilbert



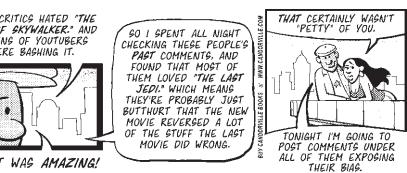
Pearls Before Swine



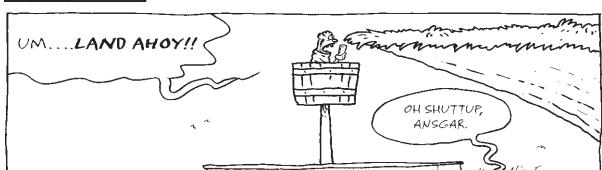
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



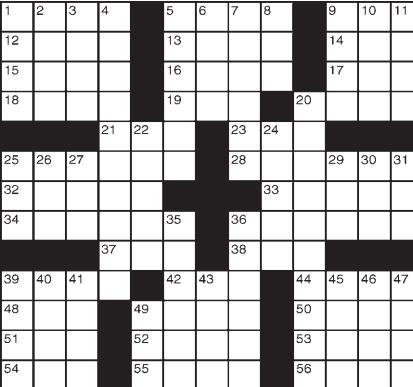
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Kvetch
5 Drench
9 Candle dripping
12 Jai —
13 Green
Gables girl
14 Mess up
15 Enlist again
16 "I never — man
I didn't like"
17 Literary
collection
18 Takeout order?
20 Glenn of the
Eagles
21 24 horas
23 Clean air org.
25 Decorates
28 Computer
shortcuts
32 Nepal's
neighbor
33 State flower of
Indiana
34 Beekeeper's
place
36 Missile's path
37 Cow's comment
38 Bruins legend
39 Jailer's janglers
42 100 cts.
44 — of sandwich
48 Jurist Lance
49 Carte
50 Here (Sp.)
51 Trail the pack

11 MRI forerunner
20 Skin softeners
22 Preamble
24 Origami need
25 One-time link
26 Chips go-with
27 Japanese sash
29 Decay
30 Lennon's lady
31 Aleppo's land
(Abbr.)
35 Alpine songs
36 Loudness
39 Bagpiper's
wear
40 JFK guesses
41 Meditative
practice
43 Burden
45 Blue hue
46 Trenches
47 Fibs
49 Fannie —

DOWN

1 Hallmark offering
2 Downwind
3 "The Addams
Family" actor
Julia
4 Pie-in-the-
sky ideas
5 Brazilian dances
6 Draft status
7 Country song?
8 Mauna —
9 Put on
10 "Rule, Britannia!"
composer
12 Glenn of the
Eagles
13 Green
Gables girl
14 Mess up
15 Enlist again
16 "I never — man
I didn't like"
17 Literary
collection
18 Takeout order?
20 Glenn of the
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21 24 horas
23 Clean air org.
25 Decorates
28 Computer
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32 Nepal's
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37 Cow's comment
38 Bruins legend
39 Jailer's janglers
42 100 cts.
44 — of sandwich
48 Jurist Lance
49 Carte
50 Here (Sp.)
51 Trail the pack

Answer to Previous Puzzle

A	A	A	ALMA	SAND
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CBER		AESOP		
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UDON	KNEE	BEND		
SIT	ANGEL	XIII		
KNEE	DEEP	SITE		
MAWR	MUSED			
GOLEM	DEBT			
ALAR	KNEE	JERK		
IDIG	FEAT	NEE		
TETE	CONS	TOY		

1-4

CRYPTOQUIP

BV S VAMMZI IAKJ JZ JRA

D J Z F A S K U X Z T Y R J S D B Y K S M

M B Y R J , B S D D T H A R A ' U X F B K Y

R Z H A J R A X A S E Z K .

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WAIT, APPARENTLY THIS IS JUST A JAZZ DANCING CLUB. YOU BROUGHT ME HERE UNDER WALTZ PRETENSES!

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals W



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SCOREBOARD/DEATHS

Sports on AFN

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myafn.net

College basketball

Wednesday's men's scores

SOUTH

ETU 49, Wyoming 48
Eurman 83, WCU 70
Samford 69, The Citadel 68
UNC-Greensboro 72, Mercer 63
Cincinnati 67, UConn 51
Creighton 92, Marquette 75
Fordham 70, St. John's 69
Wichita St. 75, East Carolina 69

WEST

SMU 82, South Carolina 64

FAR WEST

Bolts St. 65, Washington 54
Nevada 67, Colorado 59, 61
San Diego St. 61, Fresno St. 52
San Jose St. 88, New Mexico 85
UNLV 70, Utah St. 53

Men's Top 25 schedule

Friday's game

No. 5 Ohio State vs. Wisconsin

Saturday's game

No. 1 Gonzaga vs. Pepperdine

No. 3 Kansas vs. No. 16 West Virginia

No. 4 Oregon at Utah

No. 6 Louisville vs. No. 18 Florida State

No. 8 Auburn at Mississippi State

No. 10 Villanova at Marquette

No. 11 Butler vs. Creighton

No. 13 Michigan vs. Michigan State

No. 15 Maryland vs. Indiana

No. 18 Kansas vs. Missouri

No. 19 Virginia vs. Virginia Tech

No. 21 Penn State vs. No. 23 Iowa at

The Panthers

No. 22 Texas Tech vs. Oklahoma State

No. 24 Wichita State vs. Mississippi

No. 25 Arizona vs. Arizona State

No. 27 Michigan vs. Michigan

No. 12 Michigan at No. 14, Mich. State

No. 20 Dayton at Saint Joseph's

Wednesday's women's scores

SOUTH

Lipscomb 86, Queens University of Charlotte 70

UNC-Greensboro 84, Lenoir-Rhyne 59

MIDWEST

South Dakota St. 75, Wayne 41

SOUTHWEST

Cen Arkansas 63, Houston Baptist 39

Colorado St. 75, Nevada 70

Fresno St. 75, San Diego St. 54

Houston St. 75, UTEP 60

San Jose St. 81, New Mexico 80

UC Davis 96, William Jessup 32

UNLV 75, Wyoming 63

Wyoming 73, Boise St. 68

Men's Top 25 schedule

Friday's game

No. 2 Oregon vs. Colorado

No. 3 Oregon State vs. Utah

No. 4 Stanford vs. Washington

No. 10 UCLA vs. Arizona State

No. 16 DePaul at Providence

No. 18 Stanford vs. Southern Cal

No. 21 Missouri State at Loyola of Chi-

cago

No. 25 Texas vs. TCU

Deals

Wednesday's transactions

FOOTBALL

National Football League

BUFFALO BILLS — Signed DE Jonathan

Woodard to the practice squad.

DETROIT LIONS — Signed DE Eddie

Yarbrough from Buffalo's practice squad.

Placed DT Armon Watts on IR. Signed DE Courtney Upshaw from the practice squad to the practice squad. Released C.J. John from the practice squad. Placed DE Stacy Kelly on IR.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed WR

Shelton Gibson and RB Elijah Fordyce

from the practice squad.

DETROIT LIONS — Signed DE Eddie

Yarbrough from Buffalo's practice squad.

Placed DT Armon Watts on IR. Signed DE Courtney Upshaw from the practice

squad to the practice squad. Released C.J. John from the practice squad. Placed DE Stacy

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DETROIT LIONS — Signed

COLLEGE BASKETBALL/NBA

This week in the Top 25

Conference races prepare to heat up

By JOHN MARSHALL

Associated Press

The holidays gave teams a chance to recover, recharge and reset from the first two months of the season.

As the calendar flips to 2020, conference play begins for some leagues, heats up for those that already started.

The road to March is about to heat up.

This week features four games between ranked opponents and several other Top 25 teams facing stiff tests.

It starts Saturday with a Big 12 bruiser: No. 16 West Virginia at No. 3 Kansas.

The Jayhawks (10-2) won the Maui Invitational, knocked off a ranked Colorado team and stomped Stanford on Sunday. Kansas has one of the most formidable front courts in the country, with Udoka Azubuike and David McCormack, and talented guards to play with them.

The Mountaineers (11-1) are back to playing don't-give-an-inch defense under Bob Huggins after missing the NCAA Tournament last season. West Virginia won the Cancun Challenge by knocking off No. 24 Wichita State and pushed around No. 5 Ohio State in a 67-59 win on Sunday after laboring in a win against Youngstown State.

"I think it's that old adage of respect all and fear none," Huggins said after the Ohio State victory. "We came off not respecting Youngstown and they gave us a heck of a game. Hopefully our guys learned from that. We're not afraid to play people, obviously, or why would we do this?"

Rivalry renewed

No. 12 Michigan (10-3, 1-1 Big Ten) has fallen back since matching a record by debuting at No. 4 in the AP Top 25 on Dec. 2. The Wolverines lost to Louisville after their monumental poll climb and followed with losses to Illinois and No. 4 Oregon.

Following a pair of easy victories, Michigan gets a huge test on Sunday, facing rival Michigan State.

The 14th-ranked Spartans (10-3, 2-0) are trying to figure things out since star guard Cassius Winston's brother was hit by a train and killed in early November. They may also be without the All-American senior against the Wolverines.

Winston suffered a bone bruise in his left knee during practice last week and did not play in Michigan State's win over Western Michigan on Sunday night.

ACC showdown

The ACC is always tough and Saturday will be no different for No. 7 Louisville and No. 18 Florida State.

The Cardinals (11-2, 2-0 ACC) are smarting after losing to rival Kentucky on Saturday, but held Michigan to 43 points earlier in December. They also have one of the nation's best players in Jordan Nwora, who averages 20.2 points and 7.2 rebounds.

The Seminoles (11-2, 1-1) made a sweet 16 run last season after being overlooked and have the type of experienced team that could prove projections wrong again this year.

Nittany Lions and the Hawkeyes

The Big Ten will have a matchup of ranked teams on Saturday, when No. 21 Penn State faces No. 23 Iowa at The Palestra in Philadelphia.

The Nittany Lions (11-2) were blown out by Ohio State, but bounced back by beating then-No. 4 Maryland.

The Hawkeyes have losses to No. 13 San Diego State and No. 12 Michigan, but beat No. 22 Texas Tech.

Both teams have dynamic scorers. Penn State's Lamar Stevens averages 16.4 points and 7.2 rebounds after testing the NBA waters during the offseason. Iowa forward Luke Garza leads the league in scoring at 21.5 points per game and averages 10.0 rebounds. This one should be fun to watch.

Tough tests

A handful of Top 25 teams face difficult games against unranked opponents this week.

Oregon climbed to No. 4 this week to match its highest ranking, with the 2017 Final Four team. The Ducks have a difficult start to the Pac-12 season, playing at Colorado and Utah.

The Buffaloes were picked right behind Oregon in the Pac-12 pre-season poll and were ranked earlier this season. Utah has been up and down, but one of the ups was a victory over No. 17 Kentucky in Las Vegas.

No. 25 Arizona (10-3) has dropped off some since a strong start to the season, losing at No. 18 Baylor at home to top-ranked Gonzaga and to St. John's in San Francisco.

The Wildcats open Pac-12 play with a rivalry game, facing Arizona State on Saturday. The Sun Devils have been inconsistent and were run out of the gym in a loss to Saint Mary's, but have talent and will certainly be up for playing their biggest rival.

No. 13 San Diego State is one of two remaining undefeated Division I teams — with No. 8 Auburn — but will face a big challenge Saturday, playing at Utah State. The Aggies were ranked earlier this season and have one of the nation's top guards in Sam Merrill.



MATT MARTON/AP

Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, left, and the Bucks are one of several teams in the Eastern Conference that could reach 50 wins this season.

Around the NBA

Teams rising in the East

By TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

The West is used to being load-at the top.

The East, not so much.

But a new year is arriving with a new look in the NBA's Eastern Conference. The league woke up on Wednesday — the first day of 2020 — with six East teams with winning percentages of .600 or better, the first time that's been the case on New Year's Day since 1998.

"This is a tough part of the country, a tough part of our league," Philadelphia coach Brett Brown said.

He didn't say "finally," but he could have.

Just last spring, Brooklyn got the No. 6 seed in the East play-offs at 42-40. This season, it won't be conceivable if two teams in the East reach 50 wins and start the playoffs on the road anyway

— which would be amazing, considering that every 50-win team in the East since 1998 has gotten a top-four seed.

Has there been a power shift from one conference to another? And can what seems to be happening in the East race last until April?

"My gut feel is, I think it can," Brown said. "To your overall question, is there a power shift, I'm biased but I think quite possibly."

That one could easily be argued. Going into 2020, the basic structure of the standings in each conference is basically the same.

There's a team that has broken a bit away atop the pack — Milwaukee in the East; the Los Angeles Lakers out West.

Then there are five teams jostling for spots 2 through 6 — Miami, Boston, Toronto, Philadelphia and Indiana in the East; Denver, the Los Angeles Clippers, Houston, Dallas and Utah in the West.

There's a team around .500 hovering in seventh — Brooklyn in the East, Oklahoma City in the West.

And then there's a below-.500 team in eighth — Orlando in the East, San Antonio in the West.

The East and West have split the last eight NBA Finals, so it's not like there's been a huge disparity in talent at the very top. But the West, top to bottom, has unquestionably been the stronger side of the league for some time.

Things seem different now.

"It's really competitive and you have to like this," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "You have to enjoy it as a competitor. People have been disparaging the Eastern Conference for so long. You have some really good teams here in the East and the teams are proving it."

Decade in review

There were seven different franchises with at least one NBA championship in the 2010s, Golden State leading the way with three followed by Miami with two.

San Antonio was one of the five clubs with one — but a case could be made for the Spurs being the team of the decade.

The Spurs had the most wins in the 2010s, whether just counting the regular season or adding both the regular season and the play-offs together. Oklahoma City was No. 2 in regular season wins, followed by Golden State, Houston and Miami.

The fewest wins? That would be Sacramento, Boston, Brooklyn, Phoenix and New York. But a special decadelong award for futility should go to Detroit — the only team in the NBA that didn't win a playoff game in the 2010s. The Pistons have lost 14 consecutive postseason contests since winning Game 4 of the 2008 Eastern Conference finals.

NBA scoreboard

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	23	11	.676	1½
Toronto	23	11	.676	1½
Philadelphia	23	13	.639	2½
Baltimore	19	17	.526	7½
New York	10	20	.354	14½

Southeast Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Miami	24	9	.737	—
Orlando	13	19	.441	9½
Charlotte	13	23	.361	12½
Washington	10	23	.303	14
Atlanta	7	27	.206	17½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Milwaukee	31	5	.861	—
Dallas	13	12	.500	4½
Indiana	13	21	.382	17
Chicago	12	22	.353	18
Detroit	10	25	.303	19½
Cleveland	7	28	.224	22

Western Conference

Southwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	21	11	.636	1½
San Antonio	21	14	.613	4
Memphis	13	21	.382	10
New Orleans	13	21	.382	10

Northwest Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Denver	23	10	.697	—
Oklahoma City	18	11	.611	3½
Portland	18	15	.545	5
Minnesota	14	21	.400	10

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Lakers	27	7	.794	—
Phoenix	18	11	.611	3½
Sacramento	13	21	.382	14
Golden State	12	22	.353	15

Pacific Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Orlando	122	80	.591	—
New York	117	84	.553	—
Milwaukee	117	84	.553	—
L.A. Lakers	117	84	.553	—

Wednesday's games

	Team	City	Opponent	Time
Denver	at Indiana			
Oklahoma City	at Miami			
Portland	at Minnesota			
Utah	at Chicago			

Thursday's games

	Team	City	Opponent	Time
Atlanta	at Dallas			
Milwaukee	at Orlando			
Toronto	at Miami			
Portland	at Washington			
Philadelphia	at Houston			

Friday's games

	Team	City	Opponent	Time
New Orleans	at L.A. Clippers			
Toronto	at Brooklyn			
Indiana	at Atlanta			
Oklahoma City	at Cleveland			
Brooklyn	at Denver			
Philadelphia	at Charlotte			
Detroit	at Golden State			
Golden State	at Milwaukee			
New Orleans	at Sacramento			

DECade in Review

AP Male Athlete of the Decade

For James, it was good to be King

By TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

He left Cleveland for Miami, finally became a champion, went back to his beloved northeast Ohio, delivered on another title promise, then left for the Los Angeles Lakers and the next challenge. He played in eight consecutive NBA Finals. No NBA player won more games or more MVP awards over the past 10 years than he did. He started a school. He married his high school sweetheart.

"That's all?" LeBron James asked, feigning disbelief.

No, that's not all. Those were just some highlights of the past 10 years. There were many more, as the man called "King" spent the last decade reigning over all others — with no signs of slowing down.

James is The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Decade. He was a runaway winner in a vote of AP member sports editors and AP beat writers, easily outpacing runner-up Tom Brady of the New England Patriots.

"You add another 10 years of learning and adversity, pitfalls, good, great, bad, and any smart person who wants to grow will learn from all those experiences," James, 35, told the AP. "A decade ago, I just turned 25. I'm about to be 35 and I'm just in a better (place) in my life and have a better understanding of what I want to get out of life."

Usain Bolt of Jamaica was third for dominating the sprints at the 2012 and 2016 Olympics, soccer superstar Lionel Messi was fourth and Michael Phelps — the U.S. swimmer who retired as history's most decorated Olympian with 28 medals, 23 gold — was fifth.

In his 17th season, James is on pace to lead the league in assists for the first time while remaining among the NBA's scoring leaders.

"When LeBron James is involved," Denver coach Michael Malone said, "I'm never surprised."

Including playoffs, no one in the NBA scored more points than James in the past 10 years. He started the decade 124th on the league's career scoring list. He's now about to pass Kobe Bryant for No. 3. No. 2 Karl Malone and No. 1 Kareem Abdul-Jabbar are within reach.

Is catching Abdul-Jabbar the new decade's goal? "I would be lying if I said I don't see it," James said. "Obviously I'm not trying to say, 'OK, well if I play this amount of time, if I average this' ... I'm not doing that because I've never done that with my career. I've always just kind of let it happen. Whatever happens, happens. But I see it. I do see it."

His work ethic, even now, makes even those closest to him marvel.

Here's a typical day this past summer for James, who remains obsessed with working even though fame and fortune found him long ago: He'd wake up at 3 a.m. and be at the Warner Bros. lot by 3:45 — where a weight room and court, built just for him, were waiting. He'd be lifting by 4 a.m., getting shots up by 5:30 and be ready to start another day of shooting the remake of "Space Jam" that he has been planning for years by 7 a.m.

"That's who he is," said Mike Mancias, one of the longest-tenured and most trusted members of James' inner circle, tasked for more than 15 years with keeping James fit. "He does whatever it takes when it comes to fulfilling his commitments to everything — especially his game and his craft."

The 2010s for James started with "The Decision," the widely criticized televised announcement of his choice to leave Cleveland for Miami. (Lost in the hubbub: The show raised more than \$2.5 million for charity.) He was with the Heat for four years, went to the NBA Finals all four times with Dwyane Wade and Chris Bosh, finally won the title in 2012.

"It's about damn time," he said at the trophy celebration — and led the way in a Game 7 victory over San Antonio to go back-to-back the following year.

"He grew immensely here as a leader," Miami coach Erik Spoelstra said. "He impacted winning as much as with his leadership as he did with his talent. I think that was the most important thing he learned with us. And he's been able to take that to different franchises

and continue using that as a template."

Cleveland was devastated when he left. It forgave him. James came home in 2014, took Cleveland to four consecutive Finals, then led the Cavaliers to the 2016 title and came up with one of the biggest plays of his life by pulling off a chase-down block of Golden State's Andre Iguodala in the final seconds of Game 7 of that series.

In 2018, he was off to LA.

Going Hollywood made so much sense — he's making movies, has a production company, has a program called "The Shop" as part of his "Uninterrupted" platform featuring an array of guests from Drake to California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who signed a bill on the show that will allow college athletes to get paid for the use of their likeness and sign endorsement deals.

"There's a lot of moments from this decade that would be up there: winning the two Miami championships, winning a championship in Cleveland, the chase-down block," James said. "But the best moment? Definitely marrying Savannah. That would be No. 1."

James' and longtime partner Savannah Brinson got married six years ago. They already had two sons — both are very good basketball players already — and added a daughter in 2014.

James also spent most of the last decade as a lightning rod for critics. He used his voice often on social matters, speaking out after the killing of unarmed Florida teenager Trayvon Martin and campaigning for Hillary Clinton. He supported Colin Kaepernick's methods of protesting police brutality and racial injustice. Most recently, he was criticized by many — including top U.S. lawmakers — for his remarks after Houston general manager Daryl Morey sparked a massive rift between the NBA and China by sending out a tweet supporting pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong.

"I don't live in regret," James said. "There's no moment in this last decade that I wish I could have back. If a situation was bad or you feel like you could have done better, then I learned from it."

He doesn't know how much longer he'll play. He lectures missing time with his children. His "I Promise" school that opened in 2018 in his hometown of Akron, Ohio, has been an immediate success story, and he wants to see that enterprise continue growing.

Some love him. Some don't. He doesn't mind.

"When you believe in your calling or you believe in yourself, then it doesn't matter what other people say or how other people feel," James said. "And if you allow that to stop you or deter you from your mission, then you don't get anywhere."

In the 2010s, nothing deterred James.

The 2010s started with controversy for LeBron James, The Associated Press Athlete of the Decade, when he announced he was leaving Cleveland for Miami.

After winning two titles with the Heat, James returned to Cleveland in 2014 and led the Cavaliers to the 2016 NBA championship.

In 2018, he was off to Los Angeles, a move that synced up with his involvement in show business.

LYNN SLADKY/AP



DECade in Review

AP Female Athlete of the Decade



AP

Serena Williams reacts after beating Victoria Azarenka in the final of the U.S. Open on Sept. 9, 2012, in New York. Williams, who won 12 Grand Slam singles titles over the past 10 years, has been voted the AP Female Athlete of the Decade. Gymnast Simone Biles finished second in the vote by AP member sports editors and AP beat writers. Swimmer Katie Ledecky was third, followed by ski racers Lindsey Vonn and Mikaela Shiffrin.

Serena a smash on and off court

By HOWARD FENDRICH

Associated Press

Serena Williams dominated the decade, on the court and in conversation.

There were, to begin with, the dozen Grand Slam singles titles — no other woman had more than three over the past 10 seasons — and the 3½ years in a row at No. 1 in the WTA rankings.

Then there was the celebrity status that transcended tennis, making everything she did and said newsworthy, whether it was the triumphs and trophies and fashion statements or the disputes with tournament officials, the magazine covers or the Super Bowl ad with a message about women's power, the birth of her daughter or the health scare that followed.

Still winning matches and reaching Grand Slam finals into her late 30s, still mattering as much as ever, Williams was selected by The Associated Press as the Female Athlete of the Decade after a vote by AP member sports editors and AP beat writers.

"When the history books are written, it could be that the great Serena Williams is the greatest athlete of all time ... I like to call it the 'Serena Superpowers' — that champion's mindset. Irrespective of the adversity and the odds that she faces, she always believes in herself," said Stacey Allaster, CEO of the WTA from 2009-15 and now chief executive for professional tennis at the U.S. Tennis Association, which runs the U.S. Open.

"Whether it was health issues; coming back; having a child; almost dying from that — she has endured it all and she is still in championship form," Allaster said. "Her records speak for themselves."

Gymnast Simone Biles, the 2019 AP Female Athlete of the Year, finished second to Williams in voting for the decade honor, followed by swimmer Katie Ledecky. Two ski racers were next, with Lindsey Vonn finishing fourth and Mikaela Shiffrin fifth.

Williams, 38, won three AP Female Athlete of the Year awards during the decade, in 2013, 2015 and 2018. She also won in 2002 and 2009.

"She's been my idol growing up," Biles said.

"She's remained humble. She's stayed true to herself and her character and I think that's really neat about an athlete," Biles said. "Once you start winning, some get cocky, but she's stayed true to herself, win or lose."

It's the defeats that seem to drive Williams, helping prop her to heights rarely reached by any athlete in any sport.

"Whenever I lose, I get more determined, and it gives me something more to work toward," Williams said in 2013. "I don't get complacent, and I realize I need to work harder and I need to do better and I want to do better — or I wouldn't be playing the game."

With a best-in-the-game serve, powerful groundstrokes and relentless court

Williams' winning ways

Here is a sampling of statistics that demonstrate how much Serena Williams dominated women's tennis from 2010-19, based on information provided by the WTA:

- Her record was 377-45, meaning she won 89.3% of her matches.
- She won 37 titles; no one else had more than 26 (Petra Kvitova).
- She was ranked No. 1 for 196 weeks; that's more time spent atop the sport over the decade than the next two women combined.
- She reached the finals in 52.7% of the tournaments she entered; next on the list is Maria Sharapova at 29.2%.
- She won 12 Grand Slam singles titles in the decade, Angelique Kerber, with three, is the only other woman who won more than two major championships over that time.
- She reached the finals at 19 of the 33 major tournaments she entered, a 57.6% rate.

From The Associated Press

coverage, she has won 23 Grand Slam singles titles, more than anyone else in her sport's professional era, which began in 1968.

More than half came from 2010-19: four at Wimbledon, three apiece at the U.S. Open and Australian Open and two at the French Open. That includes a run of four in a row from the U.S. Open in 2014 through Wimbledon in 2015, her second self-styled "Serena Slam."

Williams was the runner-up seven times in major tournaments over the past decade, including four of the seven she's entered since returning to the tour after having a baby in 2017.

In all, she made the final at 19 of the 33 majors she entered during the decade, a nearly 58% rate.

Among her many accomplishments:

- Reaching at least one Slam final every year, a streak that dates to 2007;
- Winning gold medals in singles and doubles (with her sister, Venus) at the 2012 Olympics;
- Becoming the oldest woman to win a Grand Slam singles trophy in the professional era;
- Becoming the oldest No. 1 in WTA history and equaling Steffi Graf's record for consecutive weeks atop the rankings;
- Leading the tour with 37 singles titles, 11 more than anyone else in the decade.

The day she won Wimbledon in 2016, Williams discussed the way she constantly measures herself.

"I definitely feel like when I lose, I don't feel as good about myself," she said.

"But then I have to, like, remind myself that: 'You are Serena Williams!' You know? Like, 'Are you kidding me?' Williams continued with a laugh. "And it's those moments that I have to just, like, come off and be like, 'Serena, do you know what you've done? Who you are? What you continue to do, not only in tennis (but also) off the court? Like, you're awesome.'"

YEAR IN REVIEW

PLAYS OF THE YEAR

2019 had flair for the dramatic

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Thousands of pro games, hundreds of thousands of college games, millions of high school games and billions of youth-league, rec-league, bar-league and whatever other sort of league games you can think of were contested in 2019.

That means there were probably trillions of plays.

Of those, we're picking 10 as the best of the year.

It's a thankless task. Spoiler alert: Yes, we are missing some good ones. We're missing some very — very — good ones. Dwyane Wade's buzzer-beater to beat Golden State. Gary Woodland using his wedge on the 17th green to just about clinch the U.S. Open. Notre Dame's Arike Ogunbowale throwing a no-look behind-the-back pass for an assist. An outfielder for Liberty front-flipping over a wall to make a catch.

They were all fantastic. So were countless others.

But let's get to the ones that made the list.

10. From way downtown

Alaijah Cazun is the goaller for the men's soccer team at New Jersey City University. He'd just made a diving save to protect a 2-0 second-half lead against Purchase College, then casually walked with the ball up the top of the penalty box before putting it away.

And then he got a bounce he'll never forget.

Cazun's punt was a bit wind-aided. The ball carried about 80 yards in the air, hit the grass on the other end with some serious topspin, bounced over Purchase goalie Mario Olmedo and found its way into the net.

9. Tulane trickery

Imagine: Tulane beat Houston on a 53-yard touchdown pass with three seconds left — and that wasn't the one making this list.

The play before did.

The game, 18 seconds left, Tulane lined up as if it was going to kneel down and send the game to overtime. Except the Green Wave decided to employ some trickery, and Amare Jones' 18-yard

scamper got them near midfield — good enough for them to try the Hail Mary game-winner.

8. Goalie swagger

Penalty kicks are an inhuman way to decide anything, especially a national championship. Kaitlyn Meyer didn't mind.

The Stanford goalie was the star of the Women's College Cup, leading the Cardinal to the national title after stopping two penalty kicks from North Carolina in the game-deciding shootout. She set the tone with a dive to her right to stop the first offering from the Tar Heels, then stoned them again in the sixth round with a dive to the left.

Meyer got up, found the nearest camera, flexed, shouted and emphatically pointed to the "Stanford" across her chest after putting her team on the brink of the title. Kiki Pickett then won it for Stanford with the deciding penalty kick.

7. Another Yaz

Carl Yastrzemski won seven Gold Gloves for the Boston Red Sox. His grandson Mike Yastrzemski is pretty good with the leather as well.

The younger Yaz had some unforgettable moments in 2019 — homering at Fenway Park among them — but he turned in arguably the baseball play of the year with his game-ending catch for San Francisco in a game against Milwaukee.

Yazmani Grandal represented the tying run for the Brewers and he hit a sharp liner into left-center field. Yastrzemski got a good jump, dove and snared the ball to end the game just before it would have hit the grass.

"What a catch by Yastrzemski," then-Giants manager Bruce Bochy said.

Wasn't the first time those words were said in baseball.

6. Colorful goal

The St. Louis Blues had a comeback story for all time — going from being the worst team in the NHL midway through this past season to winning the Stanley Cup.

To get there, the Blues needed some Maroon magic first.

Patrick Maroon's goal in double overtime gave St. Louis a win in Game 7 of its Western Conference semifinal series against Dallas. The Blues went on to beat San Jose in six games, then needed another Game 7 to defeat Boston and win the

Stanley Cup.

5. Buzzer-beaters

This is where these lists get difficult. Choosing one game-winning shot is impossible.

Senior Annie Giannone of Ithaca College scored 10 of her team's final 11 points, including a sharp-angled runner with six seconds left to give her team — which was down by eight before her late closing surge — a 76-75 win over Desales and a berth in the NCAA Division III quarterfinals.

Don't forget Nathan Bain, whose layup as time expired gave Stephen F. Austin a shocking win over then-No. 1 Duke 85-83. The shot put Bain — and his story — in the limelight. Over the next few days, over \$150,000 was raised for his family, who endured hardship when Hurricane Dorian slammed the Bahamas.

But the best of the buzzer-beating bunch in 2019 was Kawhi Leonard, whose jumper from the deep right corner bounced, then bounced again, then bounced yet again, then bounced ONE MORE TIME before finally going in to give Toronto a 92-90 win over Philadelphia in Game 7 of the Eastern Conference semifinals. You know the rest: Toronto beat Milwaukee for the East title, then topped Golden State in six games for the NBA title.

4. Golden Rose

This is how you finish a World Cup championship.

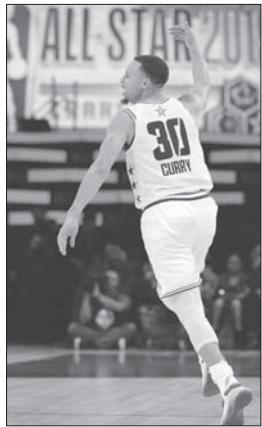
Rose Lavelle of the U.S. took a pass just inside of the midfield stripe in the 69th minute of the Women's World Cup final against the Netherlands, a game the Americans were already leading 1-0. And she sealed the title in style, dribbling about 40 yards downfield as three Dutch defenders attempted to thwart her path and a fourth was just a couple steps behind.

Lavelle waited until the last possible second before taking a left-footed strike, threading the ball between the outstretched legs of two Netherlands players before it skipped past a Netherlands and an ordinarily fantastic Dutch goalie Sanne van Veenendaal.

The outcome was never in doubt from there, and the Americans won the World Cup for the fourth time.

3. The triple double

Due respect to James Harden, Russell West-



CHUCK BURTON/AP

Team Giannis' Stephen Curry, of the Golden State Warriors, celebrates a basket against Team LeBron during the first half of an NBA All-Star game on Feb. 17 in Charlotte, N.C. Curry pulled off the bounce oop to set up Antetokounmpo for a dunk.

brook and anyone else in the NBA, the triple-double of the year was turned in by someone who stands 4-foot-8.

Simone Biles, take a bow.

If we're going to get technical, her triple-double is actually called a triple-twisting double backflip — which Biles pulled off during her floor routine multiple times this year. The run in gymnastics is if you're the first one to execute a move, it gets named on your behalf. The triple-double in gymnastics is the Biles II; the plain old double-double ... well, that's the Biles, since she was the first to do that, too.

2. 'Kick' play

The 2019 season for the Miami Dolphins was largely forgettable, except for one play where a punter found a kicker for a touchdown.

It happened in Philadelphia, a play where the Dolphins sent five players out to the left, four others to the right and had Daniel Kilgore snapping the ball to punter Matt Haack — who was basically in a shotgun quarterback stance. Haack darted to his left and just as the Eagles were about to bring him down, he shovel-passed to Jason Sanders, the Dolphins' kicker, who had slipped behind the defense.

Sanders caught it, the Dolphins went on to win, and it was the first time a kicker and punter combined for an NFL touchdown since 1964.

1. Bounce oop

Just about anyone can throw a lob for a dunk in the NBA, particularly in the All-Star Game.

Golden State's Stephen Curry raised the bar a little bit this year.

Curry took a pass from Joel Embiid on a fast break and — in less than a second — decided to set up Giannis Antetokounmpo for a dunk. Except a lob would be too boring. Instead, Curry hammered a pass off the court, then watched the ball ricochet several feet above the rim as it made its way toward the Milwaukee star.

Antetokounmpo handled it as if they'd been practicing the play for years, timing his jump perfectly to corral the ball and slam the dunk home.

"Timing was unreal," Curry said. "His length, finishing it and getting it before it came down ... a pretty bang-bang play."

The pass — and the play — just was a little better than the rest, in a year that had countless unforgettable moments.



CLAUDE PARIS/AP

The United States' Rose Lavelle, right, celebrates with teammate Alex Morgan after scoring the American's second goal during the Women's World Cup final match on July 7 against the Netherlands at the Stade de Lyon in Decines, outside Lyon, France.

YEAR IN REVIEW

GAMES OF THE YEAR

Some made memorable by blown calls

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

The New Orleans Saints looked around in disbelief, searching for a yellow flag that never came during the NFL playoffs.

The Auburn Tigers were sure they'd get the ball after a Virginia player appeared to double-dribble in the closing seconds of a thrilling Final Four game, but the refs let it go.

Not long after, the guys in stripes weren't so lax, whistling a disputed foul that sent the Cavaliers to the line for the winning free throws.

Some of the year's most memorable games were decided by controversial calls — or, perhaps it would be more appropriate to say, the calls that didn't get made.

Let's take a look back at the Top 10 from 2019:

Bouy bungle

The Los Angeles Rams advanced to the Super Bowl with an overtime win against the Saints that would not have been possible without an egregious mistake by the officials in the closing minutes of regulation.

Los Angeles cornerback Nickell Robey-Coleman committed a blatant interference penalty with a helmet-to-helmet hit on Tommylee Lewis well before the pass arrived inside the 5, forcing the Saints to settle for Wil Lutz's 31-yard field goal.

"I got away with one," Robey-Coleman conceded.

Jared Goff had enough time to lead the Rams down the field for Greg Zuerlein's tying field with 15 seconds remaining.

Then Zuerlein won it, 26-23, with a 57-yard kick in overtime.

"It happened right there in front of the person who would be the one to make the call, and everyone in the stands saw it, everyone watching at home on TV saw it," Saints quarterback Drew Brees said.

In response to the uproar, the NFL changed its rules to allow video reviews of interference calls, though that has seemingly led to even more confusion and complaints this season.

Final Four two-step

One year after becoming the first top seed to lose to a No. 16 seed, Virginia appeared headed for more heartbreak in the NCAA Tournament.

The Cavaliers squandered a 10-point lead in the final five minutes to Auburn. But they managed to pull it out, with a big helping hand from the officials.

Virginia's Ty Jerome appeared to double-dribble for what could have been a decisive turnover. Or Jerome might have been fouled before the mishandling. There was no whistle for either.

With 1.5 seconds left and in need of some magic, Virginia got the ball to Kyle Guy in the corner. He turned and fired as Samir Doughty, hands straight up in the air, bumped into Guy's hip. The shot was short, bouncing off the rim as Auburn started to celebrate.

Game over? Nope.

Official James Breeding called a foul on Doughty, sending Guy to the free-throw line. He calmly knocked down all



GERALD HERBERT / AP

Rams defensive back Nickell Robey-Coleman interferes with Saints receiver Tommylee Lewis as he breaks up a pass late in the NFC championship game. A penalty was not called, and the Rams won 26-23. The NFL changed its rules to allow reviews of interference calls.

three shots to give Virginia a disputed 63-62 win. Two nights later, in another overtime thriller, the Cavaliers captured their first national title by beating Texas Tech.

"We kind of thought we had it sealed," Auburn's Bryce Brown said. "I just didn't agree with the call."

Pavelski payout

Auburn and New Orleans weren't the only teams to gripe about the officiating.

The NHL season ended for the Vegas Golden Knights in Game 7 of the playoffs after a major penalty sparked the San Jose Sharks to a 5-4 overtime victory.

On a faceoff in San Jose's offensive zone with Las Vegas leading 3-0 midway through the third period, Cody Eakin cross-checked Sharks captain Joe Pavelski in the chest. Paul Stastny then bumped Pavelski as he fell to the ice, his helmet slamming down. Pavelski was knocked out and bleeding on the ice.

The officials huddled as a dazed Pavelski was helped to the locker room. They gave Eakin a five-minute major for cross-checking and a game

misconduct.

The Golden Knights were livid — especially after the Sharks erupted for four goals during those five minutes with an extra skater.

"They called five minutes for that?" Vegas forward Jonathan Marchessault said. "It's a joke, that's what it is."

The Golden Knights tied the game with a goal late in regulation, but Barclay Goodrow's overtime goal won it for the Sharks, 5-4.

"The boys got together and said this is for Pay," San Jose's Jon Thornton said. "It was just a matter of will, and we willed that one for him."

The Sharks became just the second team to overcome a three-goal deficit in the third period to win a Game 7.

As for the Golden Knights, they had to be content with a call from the NHL apologizing for a penalty that was too harsh.

Miracle at Anfield

Another entry to Liverpool's long list of storied comebacks.

This time, Lionel Messi and mighty Barcelona were on the receiving end in the semifinals of soccer's European Champions League.

After romping to a 3-0 win in the first game of the home-and-home, totals series, Barca seemed a lock for the final.

But back on their home turf at Anfield, Liverpool pulled off a stunning 4-0 victory that propelled the club to its sixth European title.

"This club has a big heart, and to night the heart was pounding like crazy," manager Juergen Klopp said. "You could feel it all over the world."

Twenty-four hours later, Tottenham overcame a three-goal halftime deficit on the road, stunning Ajax in the other Champions League semifinal.

"We saw Liverpool last night," Tottenham fullback Danny Rose said. "It goes to show it's not over until it is over."

Super over

After more than nine stomach-churning hours, the first Super Oval in Cricket World Cup history produced perhaps the most extraordinary over ever played — come down to one last ball.

England calmly prevailed in the fading sunlight of Lord's as New Zealand's desperate scramble to score what would have been the winning run came up short. So ended the home team's agonizing 44-year wait to be crowned world champion of the sport it invented.

"The most ridiculous game of cricket have ever been played," said Jos Buttler, England's wicket-keeper.

"The guys are shattered," countered New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. "It's devastating."

Follow the bouncing ball

Kawhi Leonard got the bounce. Then another. Then another. And, yes, one more.

Finally, the shot fell through, giving the Toronto Raptors a 92-90 victory that bounced the Philadelphia 76ers out of the NBA playoffs.

Leonard's shot from the corner over Joel Embiid was the first winning buzzer-beater in Game 7 in NBA history. The ball danced on the rim four times before dropping. It was quite a caper to Leonard's 41-point masterpiece.

The Raptors went on to claim their first NBA title by beating the defending champion Golden State Warriors.

"It was great," Leonard said. "It was a blessing to be able to get to that point and make that shot and feel that moment."

Megan's moment

Megan Rapinoe capped a remarkable year of sporting excellence and social activism by leading to United States to its second straight Women's World Cup title.

Rapinoe broke a scoreless tie in the final with a second-half penalty kick, and the Americans went on to beat the Netherlands 2-0.

Rapinoe won the Golden Ball as top player and the Golden Boot as top scorer in the monthlong tournament, but her impact went far beyond the field. She sparred with U.S. President Donald Trump and was one of the leading voices on a squad that loudly demanded equal pay with the men's team.

"We're such a proud and strong and defiant group of women," Rapinoe said.

Her trademark victory pose, looking skyward with arms outstretched, also became a worldwide sensation.

Brave blossoms

In the wake of Typhoon Hagibis, host Japan turned in a thoroughly inspiring performance at the Rugby World Cup in its final group stage match against Scotland.

A brilliant display by the team known as "The Brave Blossoms" gave them a big halftime lead. Then they held off a ferocious Scottish comeback to preserve a 28-21 victory.

Japan advanced to the quarterfinals for the first time. Even though they lost to eventual champion South Africa, their tournament run was just what their battered nation needed after the ferocious storm.

Burrow boosts Tua

Joe Burrow propelled LSU to the College Football Playoff and himself to the Heisman Trophy with a dazzling display against Tuva Tagovailoa and Alabama in college football's game of the year.

Burrow passed for 393 yards and three touchdowns, answered challenge after challenge, and helped end LSU's eight-year string of failure against the Crimson Tide.

After the Tigers' 46-41 victory, Burrow was carried off the field at Bryant-Denny Stadium by his teammates.

"We've finally got the tools that we need to beat those guys," coach Ed Orgeron said. "To have a championship team, you've got to have a champion ship quarterback."

Angel on the pitcher's mound

In their first home game after the death of pitcher Tyler Skaggs, the Los Angeles Angels honored his memory with a combined no-hitter from Taylor Cole and Felix Pena in a 13-0 victory over Seattle.

The Angels played a practically perfect game on the day before what would have been Skaggs' 28th birthday.

"He was definitely looking over us tonight," said Mike Trout, who contributed a 454-foot homer and six RBIs.

Later, officials ruled that Skaggs' died from an accidental drug overdose, prompting Major League Baseball to start testing for cocaine and opioids.



MARCO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Members of the Los Angeles Angels place their jerseys with No. 45 in honor of pitcher Tyler Skaggs on the mound after the team combined for a no-hitter on July 12 against the Seattle Mariners.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Ducks look to build on win in Rose Bowl

Associated Press

PASADENA, Calif. — Justin Herbert scored his third rushing touchdown of the 106th Rose Bowl on a thrilling 30-yard run with 7:41 to play Wednesday night, and No. 7 Oregon held off No. 11 Wisconsin 28-27 to win its third straight trip to the Grand-daddy of Them All.

Buddy Breeze returned a fumble 31 yards for an early touchdown for the Ducks (12-2). Herbert then made his go-ahead rambling run on the next snap after Breeze forced another fumble.

As long as Mario Cristobal is coaching at Oregon, his players say greater success is possible.

"The best thing Oregon football has ever done is hire Coach Cristobal as their head coach because I feel like this football team embodies everything that he's about," senior left guard Shane Lemieux said. "And he's bringing in these offensive and defensive linemen that are SEC-type and are physical football players, and I think he's changing the Pac-12 with the way he coaches, the way he recruits, because we play a different way. And you're seeing it."

The changes at Oregon are a reflection of Cristobal's personality, background and experience.

As an offensive lineman at Miami, he played on two national championship teams. After an up-and-down stint as head coach at Florida International, Cristobal worked as an assistant under

Nick Saban at Alabama, where he was a key cog in a relentless recruiting machine.

In his two seasons at Oregon, Cristobal has stressed the need to dominate up front and has worked tirelessly to bring in the caliber of players to fulfill that goal.

The early results of that aim were on the Rose Bowl field in freshman defensive end Kayvon Thibodeaux and sophomore left tackle Penei Sewell. Thibodeaux, the top player in the 2019 recruiting cycle and a Los Angeles native, had one tackle against Wisconsin but pressured quarterback Jack Coan on several key third downs. Sewell anchored a line that did not allow a sack.

Wisconsin dominated the game statistically, including holding the ball for more than 38 minutes, but Oregon was able to assert itself up front in the critical moments.

Thibodeaux said the ability to execute when the game was on the line was a reflection of the atmosphere Cristobal has instilled. "It's different," Thibodeaux said. "It's the mentality, the culture, everything is different."

The Ducks signed another touted recruiting class, including the top player in California for the second straight year in linebacker Justin Flotte. That influx of talent should keep even established veterans locked in during spring practice, summer workouts and training camp.



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Minnesota wide receiver Tyler Johnson, right, had 12 catches for 204 yards and two touchdowns Wednesday to lead the Golden Gophers to a 31-24 defeat of Auburn in the Outback Bowl in Tampa.

Johnson lifts Minnesota over Auburn in Outback

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — With the clock winding down on a dominating performance in the Outback Bowl, Minnesota fans broke into a chant of "Row The Boat, Row The Boat, Row The Boat."

The never-give-up mantra coach P.J. Fleck used to help change the culture of Golden Gophers football continues to inspire a program determined to recapture its glory days.

"We challenged everyone of our players, you want to be a blue blood you've got to beat the blue bloods," Fleck said Wednesday after No. 16 Minnesota beat No. 9 Auburn 31-24 in a game that

wasn't as close as the final score.

"We used to be a blue blood back in the 30's, 40's, 50's and 60's," Fleck added. "We've talked about the word of the year is restore. We want to restore that tradition."

Tyler Johnson had 12 receptions for 204 yards and two touchdowns to become the Gophers' career receiving leader and Minnesota outlasted the Tigers 215 yards to 56' dominating time of possession.

"We didn't overlook them. I think our guys were ready to play. I think our guys played hard but they made the plays, we didn't," Auburn coach Gus Malzahn said.

Johnson broke Eric Decker's school record for receiving yards on his second catch of the day and became Minnesota's all-time leader for scoring receptions on a one-handed, 2-yard TD catch that put the Gophers (11-2) up 24-17 at halftime.

The senior's 17-yard catch-and-run put his team ahead for good early in the fourth quarter.

"Coach Fleck says all the time, that this program is going up, and as you see today it's definitely going in the right direction," Johnson said. "Just having the right guys in the locker room is very important and everyone buying in."

Bowl roundup

Jeudy, Jones lead Tide past Wolverines

Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — Mac Jones threw three touchdown passes, Jerry Jeudy became the first Alabama player to top 200 receiving yards in a bowl game and the ninth-ranked Crimson Tide topped No. 17 Michigan 35-16 on Wednesday in the Citrus Bowl.

Jones connected with Jeudy for an 85-yard score on Alabama's first snap, DeVonta Smith and Miller Forristall added touchdown grabs in the second half for the Crimson Tide (11-2), which trailed 16-14 at the break. Najee Harris ran for 136 yards and two touchdowns for Alabama.

Jeudy finished with six catches for 204 yards. His previous career-high for yards was 147 set last season against Missouri, and the Alabama bowl record had stood for more than a half-century — Ray Perkins had 178 yards against Nebraska in the 1967

Sugar Bowl

Jones — who took over as Alabama's starter when Tua Tagovailoa was lost for the season with an injury in November — completed 16 of 25 passes for 327 yards.

Tagovailoa said on Twitter that he will announce Jan. 6 whether he will enter the NFL draft or return to college for another season.

No. 5 Georgia 26, No. 8 Baylor 14: Georgia freshman receiver George Pickens left behind his regrettable ending to the regular season and put the rest of college football on notice that he will be an exceedingly tough cover in 2020.

Pickens caught 12 passes for 175 yards and a touchdown in a Sugar Bowl win Wednesday in New Orleans.

"I've still got growing to do, but I can kind of tell myself I'm improving every day," said the 6-foot-3 Pickens,

who was suspended for the first half of Georgia's SEC title game loss to LSU because of his fight with a Georgia Tech player in the Bulldogs' regular-season finale. "It was a great season to me. You win some, you lose some."

Baylor quarterback Charlie Brewer, coming back from a concussion in the Big 12 title game on Dec. 7, was sidelined again in the fourth quarter when the back of his head appeared to hit the turf hard as he was taken down by two defenders while going out of bounds.

Baylor coach Matt Rhule said Brewer did not appear concussed this time. Medical staff was concerned about possible spinal and neck injuries. Rhule expected Brewer to be monitored overnight, but added that early indications were the injuries were not career threatening.



JOHN RAOUX/AP

Alabama quarterback Mac Jones threw three touchdown passes Wednesday in the No. 9 Crimson Tide's 35-16 defeat of No. 17 Michigan in the Citrus Bowl in Orlando.

NFL

Homer's odyssey

Sixth-round pick, once buried on the depth chart, has shined as a starter for Seahawks

BY TIM BOOTH

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — For all the hype and attention that came with Marshawn Lynch's return to the Seattle Seahawks, he wasn't the running back that left the strongest impression.

Don't believe it? Listen to Lynch himself.

"You're inspiring me," Lynch was caught saying to Seattle rookie running back Travis Homer on the sideline of last Sunday's regular-season finale against San Francisco.

If there was a bright spot to come out of Seattle's loss to San Francisco in Week 17, it was the discovery of yet another late-round draft pick showing potential as a ball carrier in Seattle's backfield. Thrust into the starting role after injuries to Rasheed Penny, Chris Carson and C.J. Prosise robbed Seattle of its depth over the final month of the season, Homer showed unabashed confidence, a willingness to deliver a hit and bursts of speed that had been buried on the depth chart all season.

Seattle will need another performance like that from Homer on Sunday in the opening round of the playoffs against Philadelphia.

"The consistency that he hits it when he's got the ball in his hands, he's got a really good style, attitude about running the ball. He's just downhill and give you everything he's got," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said. "That suddenness really is an asset. We really love the way he plays, love the style of his play."

It just took a while to see what Homer could bring on the field.

He was a sixth-round pick of the Seahawks in the April draft and while he showed a few flashes during the preseason it was clear early on that Homer would be deep on the depth chart. But he instantly became important on

special teams and that kept him on the active gameday roster for all 16 games. While he wasn't getting carries, he was at least getting on the field.

The first carry of his career didn't come until Week 13 against Minnesota when he took a fake punt for 29 yards. He got a couple of carries in cleanup duty against Carolina two weeks later after Penny was lost for the season to a knee injury. A week later, Homer was suddenly Seattle's only healthy running back after Carson (hip) and Prosise (arm) suffered season-ending injuries in the first half of Seattle's loss to Arizona.

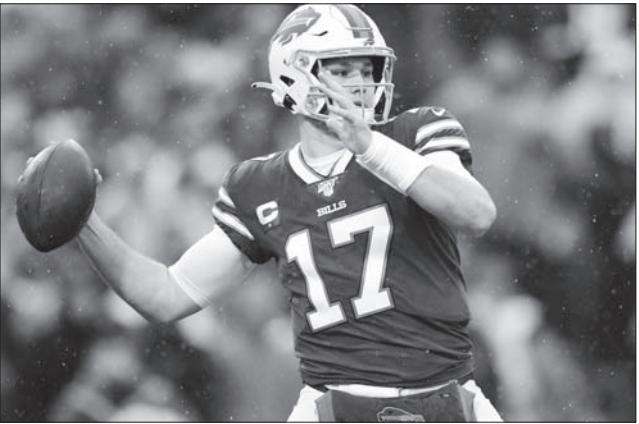
Carroll said he had to remind Homer that day to be a little smarter when to avoid hits because he was Seattle's only healthy running back remaining.

There was no need for Homer to hold back against the 49ers after the arrival of Lynch to add depth. Homer finished with 62 yards rushing on 10 carries and added another five receptions for 30 yards. He was exceptionally good on Seattle's final two possessions of the fourth quarter doing a little of everything required of a running back in Seattle's offense. He ran when given a chance. He caught a few passes out of the backfield as a secondary option and most importantly, was solid in pass protection helping keep Russell Wilson clean.

The entire week was surreal for Homer leading into his first career start. He knew he was going to be a big part of the game plan, but at the same time was also trying to help out Lynch in his return after 14 months away from football and four years away from Seattle.

And as for what Lynch said to him on the sideline?

"It was definitely a cool moment for me to have one of the greatest come up to me and say what he said," Homer said.



DAVID DERMER/AP

In making his NFL playoff debut against the Texans this weekend, second-year Buffalo Bills quarterback Josh Allen gets an opportunity to show how far he's come since his last trip to Houston 14 months ago.

This Bill is now due: Allen comes into his own in his second season

BY JOHN WAWROW

Associated Press

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. — Whatever bad memories Bills quarterback Josh Allen had of his first and only game NFL game at Houston have been pushed aside some 14 months later.

There's no need to remind the second-year player of leaving the game in the third quarter with a sprained throwing elbow that eventually led to him missing five weeks. And Allen doesn't need to hear of the telltale rookie awkwardness he displayed after being thrust into a starting role ahead of schedule as a result of Nathan Peterman's turnover-prone issues.

However, raw Buffalo's first-round draft pick looked in the weeks leading up to a 20-13 loss to the Texans on Oct. 14, 2018, Allen believes he's made considerable strides in preparing to make his playoff debut in an AFC wild-card game at Houston on Saturday.

"Obviously, going through that game there's not great memories. Nobody likes getting hurt," he said following practice Tuesday.

"I feel like a different player from last year ... just as far as seeing things, seeing defenses, trusting the guys around me and not trying to make the big play all the time."

Allen's progress has been apparent during a season in which he's posted five fourth-quarter comebacks and helped Buffalo (10-6) to its best finish in 20 years. He's doubled his touchdown passing total to 20; his completion percentage has jumped by 6 points to 58.6; and his 3,089 yards passing are the most by a Bills player since Ryan Fitzpatrick had 3,400 in 2012.

Having shown a flair for performing in national settings by beating the Cowboys at Dallas on

By the numbers

85.3

Passer rating this season for Buffalo Bills quarterback

Josh Allen, who has 20 touchdowns and 10 interceptions.

67.9

Passer rating last season for Allen, who had 10 touchdowns and 12 interceptions as a rookie

for the Bills.

maintaining an even keel.

"The juices get flowing, it's a competitive time of year and you've got to do a good job of trying to stay as level-headed as you can," offensive coordinator Brian Daboll said. "You want to win it so bad, but you've got to stay consistent with your routine and the things you've done all throughout the year."

If there's a concern, it's Allen acknowledging he's experienced early game jitters, most recently following a 24-17 loss at New England two weeks ago. It was a game in which he went 6-for-13 for 62 yards and a touchdown in the first half, before finishing 13-for-26 for 208 yards and two touchdowns.

Slow starts have been an issue this season.

Buffalo's game-opening drives have produced just one touchdown and four field goals. And the Bills have combined to score just 12 points in the first quarter of their past eight games, and 43 overall.

"That's on my shoulders. We've got to go and start faster," Allen said.

As for the jitters?

"Just got to ride it," he said. "It's OK to be hyped at times. It means that you care."

Backup Matt Barkley credited Allen for showing growth and maturity. Barkley noted how Allen is no longer scrambling out of the pocket at the first sign of pressure, and has cut down on trying to force plays which lead to negative gains or turnovers.

That's different to the player Barkley saw when he first arrived in Buffalo two weeks after Allen was hurt against the Texans.

"I do think there was a drastic change from the first half of the season and when he came back," he added.



STEPHEN BRASHEAR/AP

Seattle Seahawks running back Travis Homer, with ball, didn't get a carry until Week 13 but averaged 6.2 yards a carry in his team's 26-21 loss to San Francisco on Sunday.

NFL PLAYOFFS

Critical juncture

Vikings quarterback Cousins still seeking first postseason victory

By DAVE CAMPBELL

Associated Press

EAGAN, Minn. Minnesota's investment in Kirk Cousins has yet to yield a postseason victory. The hyper-scrutinized quarterback's first opportunity to get one with the Vikings has arrived this week, on the heels of his career-best season.

Traveling to the Superdome to take on New Orleans in the first round isn't exactly a soft launch.

"I think there's just more juice and excitement," Cousins said. "There always is, but certainly in the playoffs it brings an intensity that makes it kind of fun."

Cousins has little experience with this, having been to the postseason only twice in his previous seven years in the league. He was the backup for Washington as a rookie in 2012, when he replaced an injured Robert Griffin III in the fourth quarter against Seattle in a 24-14 defeat. Cousins went just 3-for-10 for 31 yards in relief. Then in 2015, his first season as the full-time starter, Cousins went 29-for-46 for 329 yards and a touchdown against Green Bay, taking six sacks in a 35-18 loss.

All the Vikings needed to do to make the playoffs in his debut in 2018 was beat Chicago at home on the final week of the schedule, but they lost 24-10 in what was essentially a postseason game to finish 8-7-1 and miss the cut. This year, with the offense much improved save for that poor performance in defeat on Dec. 23 against the Packers, the Vikings (10-6) had their spot secured with two games to go in the regular season.

They have to play against the Saints (13-3), however, in a venue as daunting for a visitor as any in the NFL. The last time the Vikings had a postseason game away from home, two years ago, they were blown out 38-7 in the NFC championship game at Philadelphia. Cousins has never taken snaps on the road in the playoffs.

Naturally, the intensity and focus

Kirk Cousins could be playing for his future in Minnesota when the Vikings take on the Saints.

AP

has increased this week, but by how much should it ramp up?

"On one hand you say, 'Shame on us if we haven't been giving our all every week, every day, all season long.' You can also talk on the other side and say, 'Don't leave anything on the table. Bring everything you've got.' I don't think that means you haven't been doing that. I think it just means there's a sense of urgency in the playoffs," said Cousins, whose touchdown rate (5.9 percent), interception rate (1.4 percent) and average yards per attempt (8.1) in 2019 were the best marks of his career since he became a full-time starter in 2015.

Cousins is only under contract through the 2020 season, with a whopping salary cap hit of \$31 million. The Vikings don't have to do anything with his deal this winter, but if they're not convinced he's worth an extension then they'd be wise to strongly consider using this draft to find a potential replacement. Either way, his performance at New Orleans on Sunday will go a long way toward shaping his legacy in purple.

Although Cousins is the most scrutinized of the bunch, he's far from the only member of the Vikings facing a crossroad game this weekend. General manager Rick Spielman and head coach Mike Zimmer each have only one more year on their contracts, too. Despite all of the strides made and stability established under their leadership in the front office and on the field, the Vikings have won just one postseason game in the past 10 years. That was, fittingly, against the Saints two years ago on the "Minnesota Miracle" touchdown pass on the final play.

"Every little thing becomes a lot more magnified because of the consequences of winning and losing," Zimmer said, "so everybody has to do a little bit extra in preparation so we don't make those mistakes, we line up and play hard and play fast."



VERA NIEUWENHUIS/AR

Philadelphia Eagles running back Boston Scott takes a handoff from quarterback Carson Wentz against the New York Giants on Dec. 29. Scott was promoted from the practice squad in October after injuries to Corey Clement and Darren Sproles.

Who are these guys? Philly counting on its no-name offense

By ROB MAADDI

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Carson Wentz began the season playing with DeSean Jackson, Alshon Jeffery, Nelson Agholor, Zach Ertz and Darren Sproles and finished it with a group of unknown players helping the injury-ravaged Philadelphia Eagles reach the playoffs.

Running back Boston Scott, tight end Josh Perkins and wide receivers Greg Ward, Deontay Burnett and Robert Davis have been cut a combined 18 times by seven teams in their careers. But the Eagles relied on them in an elimination game in Week 17.

The group combined for 279 scrimmage yards and four touchdowns in a 34-17 victory over the Giants that clinched the NFC East title for Philadelphia (9-7). They'll be counted on again when the Eagles host Seattle (11-5) in a wild-card game Sunday.

Who are these guys? Scott, only 5-foot-6 but powerful, was a sixth-round pick by New Orleans in 2018. The Eagles signed him off the Saints' practice squad in December 2018 and he returned kickoffs in the playoffs last season.

Scott was among the final cuts in training camp, re-signed to the practice squad and was promoted in October after injuries to Corey Clement and Darren Sproles.

With Miles Sanders on the sideline and Jordan Howard only getting one snap, Scott ran for three TDs against the Giants and led the team in yards rushing (54) and receiving (84).

"The fact that I've had opportunities, Doug Pederson has had confidence in me, the coaching staff has had confidence in me, I'm really grateful to be out there because I have definitely made mistakes, but it's been cool," Scott said.

Perkins signed with Atlanta in 2016 after going undrafted. He caught a touchdown pass from Matt Ryan that season and played in the Super Bowl loss to New England. The Eagles signed him in January 2018 and he has spent time on the active roster and practice squad over the past two seasons. He was promoted after a slew of injuries and had nine catches for 87 yards in two wins over the Giants, including a 24-yard TD catch.

Ward's journey began as a quarterback at the University of Houston. He converted to receiver after going undrafted. The Eagles signed him in 2017 and he was on the practice squad when the team won the Super Bowl two seasons ago. Ward has been cut six times but finally got his chance in November. He caught a 4-yard TD pass in the final minute of a comeback win at Washington on Dec. 15 and has 21 catches for 209 yards during Philadelphia's four-game winning streak.

"I always believed in myself and always believed in what I can do," Ward said. "It's a blessing to be here."

Burnett signed as a rookie free agent with Tennessee in 2018, made 10 catches for the Jets last year, briefly spent time with the 49ers this season and came to Philadelphia in December. He was promoted to the active roster last week and had a 41-yard catch against the Giants.

"We've had new playmakers every week, different guys stepping up because guys are getting hurt and banged up," Wentz said. "It's just fun to see guys step in big moments like that, guys who were on the practice squad. For them to step up in the way they have and for guys to make plays, it's been so cool to see. I think that's what makes it that much more fun to do what we did and then hopefully we can go do something special."

NFL PLAYOFFS

Pats' D, Titans' offense shine in red zone

By KYLE HIGHTOWER
Associated Press

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. — With a few exceptions, the Patriots' defense demolished opposing offenses this season by limiting big plays and opportunities in the red zone.

It will face a Titans offense in Saturday's wild-card round that was the best in the league in both categories.

Tennessee comes into the postseason with one of the NFL's hottest offenses. Quarterback Ryan Tannehill led the NFL with a career-best 117.5 passer rating. He joined Sammy Baugh and Joe Montana as the only quarterbacks to complete at least 70% of their passes (70.3%) and average at least 9 yards per pass attempt (9.6).

The Titans also forced defenses to keep tabs on running back Derrick Henry, who had a league-best 1,540 rushing yards to pace the league's third-ranked rushing offense (138.9 yards per game).

Scoreboard

Playoff glance

Wild-card Plays

Saturday, Jan. 4

Buffalo at Houston

Tennessee at New England

Sunday, Jan. 5

Minnesota at Indianapolis

Seattle at Philadelphia

Divisional Plays

Saturday, Jan. 11

Philadelphia, Seattle or Minnesota at

San Francisco

Houston, Buffalo or Tennessee at

Baltimore

Sunday, Jan. 12

New England, Houston or Buffalo at

Kansas City

New Orleans, Philadelphia or Seattle

at Green Bay

Conference Championships

Sunday, Jan. 19

AFC

NFC

Pro Bowl

Sunday, Jan. 26

At Orlando, Fla.

AFC vs. NFC

Super Bowl

Sunday, Feb. 2

At Miami Gardens, Fla.

AFC champion vs. NFC champion

NFL injury report

NEW YORK — The National Football League's injury report, as provided by the league:

Saturday

Buffalo Bills at Houston Texans

— BILLS: DNP; LB Lorenzo Alexander (not injury related — resting veteran), DE Shaod Lawson (not injury related — resting veteran), DE Shaod Lawson (hamstring), T Ty Nsekhe (ankle), WR Andre Holmes (knee), CB Tre'Davious White (knee), TE Jordan Thomas (illness), LIMITED: S Jahlil Oluoc (ankle), LB Matt Milano (knee), CB Joejuan Johnson (knee), CB Bradley Roby (hamstring), S Terrence Brooks (groin), LB Jacob Martin (knee), CB Tre'Davious White (knee), CB Jonathan Jones (groin), CB Jason McCourty (groin).

Sunday

Minnesota Vikings at New Orleans Saints

— VIKINGS: S Mike Neal, ENC, LAND, PATRIOTS vs. VIKINGS: DNP; WR Adam Humphries (ankle). LIMITED: T Jack Conklin (knee), WR Cody Houston (groin), CB Tre'Davious White (groin). FULL: LB Daren Bates (shoulder), CB Tre'Davious White (groin), CB Tre'Davious White (knee), CB Jordan Poyer (knee), S Terrence Brooks (groin), T Marcus Cannon (groin), LB Matt Milano (knee), CB Julian Edelman (knee), CB Jonathan Jones (groin), CB Jason McCourty (groin).

Sunday

Seattle Seahawks at Philadelphia Eagles

— SEAHAWKS: S Mike Neal, ENC, LAND, PATRIOTS vs. SEAHAWKS: DNP; WR Adam Humphries (ankle), RB Miles Sanders (ankle). LIMITED: DE Derek Barnett (ankle), DT Eddie Goldman (knee), CB Tre'Davious White (knee), T Lane Johnson (ankle), CB Sidney Jones (knee), CB Avonte Maddon (ankle), CB Denzel Millings (ankle). SEAHAWKS: No report.



Buffalo Bills (10-6)
at **Houston Texans (10-6)**
AFN-Sports
10:35 p.m. Saturday CET
6:35 a.m. Sunday JKT



Tennessee Titans (9-7)
at **New England Patriots (12-4)**
AFN-Sports
2 a.m. Sunday CET
10 a.m. Sunday JKT



Minnesota Vikings (10-6)
at **New Orleans Saints (13-3)**
AFN-Sports
7 p.m. Sunday CET
3 a.m. Monday JKT



Seattle Seahawks (11-5)
at **Philadelphia Eagles (9-7)**
AFN-Sports
10:30 p.m. Sunday CET
6:30 a.m. Monday JKT

The efficiency of Tannehill and Henry helped open up the field for a unit that was tops in the league with nine plays that went for 50 yards or more and scored touchdowns on a league-best 75.6% of its trips inside the 20-yard line.

Tennessee only had 45 drives in the red zone this season, ranking 25th in the league. But when the Titans get there, Patriots coach Bill Belichick said they showed an ability to get into the end zone in multiple ways.

"They do a good job of getting the ball to everybody and they have, obviously, the best running game in the league," Belichick said. "When you combine those two things and the quarterback — the quarterback can move down there, too. But, honestly, they've skipped over the red area a lot."

The Patriots have allowed only three passing plays of more than 50 yards this season, but safety Devin McCourty said

players such as Titans rookie receiver A.J. Brown have shown a unique ability to turn plays such as reverses or short catches into big gains.

"Obviously, they've got a lot of guys that can beat you vertically. But you watch them, it's a quick slant or a slant post and A.J. Brown catches it, now he breaks a tackle and now you're trying to catch a guy that you're not going to catch," McCourty said.

Brown has four touchdown catches of at least 50 yards this season, joining Isaac Curtis (five in 1973), Willie Gault (four in 1983) and Hall of Famer Randy Moss (five in 1998) as the only rookies with at least four such TDs since the merger.

In addition to players such as Brown and Henry, McCourty said they'll also have to account for tight end Jonnu Smith, who had a 57-yard run against Houston in Week 15 and caught a 41-yard TD pass in Week 16 against New Orleans.

By the numbers

0.9 **75.6**

Average touchdowns per game the Patriots have allowed this season when opponents are in the Pats' red zone.

SOURCE: NFL.com

Winning: Watson is the face of a franchise

FROM BACK PAGE

Watson and when he knew he was special.

"He's a winner, cares about winning, will do whatever it takes to win," O'Brien said. "That came across in the first two meetings, so I would say it was way before he got here and on the practice field."

As O'Brien has gotten to know Watson better and watched him lead the Texans, he's only become more impressed with him.

"He's got great poise," O'Brien said. "Anybody that's been around him for a long time, (knows) he doesn't have any fear. He has a lot of fun playing, you see the smile on his face, he loves playing football and he loves being out there with his teammates."

Watson takes great pride in being a leader and knows how he carries himself will rub off on the rest of the team and impact how others perform.

"You're the face of the franchise and everyone is looking (at you)," he said. "So regardless of where you're down, if you're up, you're facing that adversity (or) you're having success too, people want to still see that fight and that will to continue to finish what you started and try to win the game or what you're competing in. Everyone is going to know that and everyone will see it."

Receiver DeAndre Hopkins loves that quality in Watson and thinks that's one of the reasons why he's so successful.

"Everybody in this locker room, offense and defense, feels off of his game and how he never feels like we're out of a game no matter what the score is," Hopkins said. "He's a winner. He's won his whole career and it shows every day in everything he does."

Watson has a penchant for shining in the biggest moments. He did it when he helped Gainesville High School to a Georgia state title and at Clemson when he led the Tigers to a national championship in the 2016 season. Watson has continued that success with



MARK ZALESKI/AP

Houston Texans quarterback Deshaun Watson said the experience he gained in last year's playoff loss to the Indianapolis Colts should help him Saturday against the Buffalo Bills.

the Texans, where he's helped them to consecutive AFC South titles and had some of his biggest games when Houston was playing in prime time.

But in perhaps the biggest game of his NFL career, Watson came up short. Last season in his playoff debut Watson threw an interception and struggled to move the offense effectively in a 21-7 loss to the Indianapolis Colts.

He believes the experience in that game will help him on Saturday when he gets another chance to notch his first postseason win.

"Just knowing that ... the game is going to go by faster, the plays, the players play a little bit faster than the regular season. Everything just speeds up," he said. "So just being able to be prepared and see how the energy and everything changes in a playoff game, it really helps out to get that first hand look last year. I know it didn't go our way, but we've got another opportunity this year."

He has thrown for 3,852 yards with 26 touchdowns and 12 interceptions and has run for 413

yards with seven more scores this season. Watson, who sat out last week with Houston's playoff spot set, threw five interceptions in his last three games played after only being picked off twice in Houston's previous five games. He said those misfires have been as powerful recently as it was earlier in the season.

"My turnovers," he said. "That's pretty much it ... if I don't turn two balls over in Tennessee that's 14 extra points and who knows how the game goes, it's something that we corrected."

O'Brien has no doubt that Watson will get back on track this week and raved about how much he'd improved in his three seasons with the Texans.

"He gets better every day," O'Brien said. "I wouldn't be able to pick out one thing. He gets better every day at everything. He tries to work on everything from mechanics to knowledge of the game plan to defensive knowledge."

SPORTS

NFL PLAYOFFS

Winning attitude

Texans feed off Watson's will to compete as they prepare to host Bills in AFC wild-card game

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

Deshaun Watson doesn't remember a time when he wasn't competing. Whether it was trying to outrun his older brother while taking out the trash as a child or running away from defenders during a game of flag football, he had the same mentality.

"It's definitely in my DNA to go out there and compete and try to win in everything I do," Watson said.

Years later, the Houston Texans quarterback has maintained that same mindset, and when you ask almost anyone about him that's one of the first things they'll bring up. As the Texans prepare to host the Buffalo Bills in the first round of the playoffs on Saturday, coach Bill O'Brien reminisced about his early interactions with



■ Patriots D faces one of league's hottest offenses in Titans, Page 63

■ Vikings QB Cousins still looking for his 1st playoff victory, Page 62

■ Bills QB Allen ready to show how much he has improved, Page 61

SEE WINNING
ON PAGE 63

ERIC CHRISTIAN SMITH/AP

Obits: Former NBA commissioner Stern; Don Larsen, who threw only World Series perfect game » **Page 54**

Associated Press picks plays, games of year » **Pages 58-59**

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